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["OH! MY BABY!" CRIED BERYL. "WOULD THAT YOU WERE DEAD AND SAFE FROM ALL THE SUFFERING OF THIS CRUEL WORLD."]

BERYL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I DID NOT expect to see you here!"

The speaker was Beryl Chesney, her tone full of cutting reproach, for her impression was that Philip Arnison was at Garby simply as a spy upon her secrets. The one great object she had for keeping peace with him was gone.

Lord Chesney had died with his hand in hers, his last words blessing her. No carefully-prepared tale of Philip's could trouble him now. No sudden revelation of his grandchild's past could shock him now.

This knowledge gave a strange calm to Beryl's manner. She felt that Mr. Arnison had discovered something. How much she could not tell, and yet she could defy him, since, whatever happened, there was no one left to sorrow because of her secret.

She was pale as marble. She looked more like a beautiful statue than a living woman as she disregarded Philip's outstretched hand

and stepped unaided to the platform, her only greeting that cutting speech,—

"I did not expect to see you here!"

He looked at her and understood. The time for fencing and smooth-speaking had gone by. For some unfathomable reason she was resolved to defy him. Well, he would meet her in her own coin.

"Indeed! Well, it's rather odd for you to appear here suddenly, since you can't possibly return to The Towers to-night, and, if the papers are to be believed, Lord Chesney's health is in the most precarious state."

"Lord Chesney died early this morning. I dare say you will find a telegram from his lawyer at your chambers."

"Dead!"

For once he was off his guard, and Beryl could see the news was a blow to him. He had some private reason for wishing the peer's life prolonged for a season.

"He made his will," went on Beryl, in a dry, matter-of-fact tone. "I don't know anything of its contents, except that he has provided for Mrs. Bolton, and she has promised me a home with her. If you are master

of The Towers we will move in a very few days."

"Why do you hate me so?" he demanded, bitterly. "Other women, aye, and beautiful ones, too, have smiled on me, and yet you treat me like the dirt beneath your feet."

"I cannot enter into discussions now, for I am anxious to reach my destination. Now you have heard of Lord Chesney's death you will probably return south to-night, I suppose?"

It was a false move, for she had shown her wish to be free of him, and he was quick enough to see it.

"I don't know, I am sure. Of course I shall attend the funeral, but there is no hurry. Is your maid here, or shall I see after your luggage and get you a cab?"

"My maid is at The Towers, and I have no luggage except this bag."

"It would be wise to secure a bed at the hotel," he said, thoughtfully. "Mrs. Arnold's house is full, and she could not take in anyone."

"What is Mrs. Arnold to me?" said Beryl,



indignantly. "Why should you think I have come to see her?"

Arnison smiled.

"You see, my dear cousin, everyone does not share your aversion to me. I chance to be a dear friend and confidante of the Lyndon family. From them I hear of the strange disappearance of Mrs. Arnold's little girl, and that the mother, instead of sending for a detective, summoned a "friend" who was interested in the child—a Mrs. Bolton, who often visited Glenfriars in company with a Miss Chesney. Of course I recognised the names, though from the description I fancied the simple folks at Glenfriars had somewhat confused your identity with Marion's."

"Will you let me pass?" demanded Beryl. "If you were a man you would not stand here torturing me, but you are a coward and a craven!"

"Indeed!" returned Phil, lightly. "But, young lady, you had better keep friends with me. You are not proved to be Lord Chesney's heiress yet. He may have remembered my claims. In that case you and your interesting *protégée*, Birdie Arnold, may need a friend."

"I should prefer the workhouse to your friendship!" said Beryl, bitterly; and then seeing her determination he moved aside to let her pass, but as she went towards the line of waiting cabs a porter accosted her.

"Is it Mrs. Bolton? Please, ma'am, I was to ask you if you'd step into the station-master's house. He's Mrs. Arnold's brother-in-law, and they have a message for you."

Kate Hall understood why ugly little Giles had been dearer to her sister than beautiful Baby Birdie the moment she looked at the stranger's face.

The station-master's wife was a woman, and a happy one, but happiness had not hardened her heart, and it was with real tact and great gentleness that she accosted Beryl.

"I beg your pardon for stopping you. My sister fancied you would not like to meet strangers, and her house is full of Sir Basil Lyndon's relations. She will be here in half-an-hour, and I hoped you would perhaps stay with me while you are in Garby."

Beryl lifted her white, waxen face to Kate's, and said huskily,—

"The child—do you know—"

"I never knew till last night," said Mrs. Hall, frankly. "Till then we believed Birdie to be our little niece, and loved her dearly as such. But when she was lost, and my sister exclaimed 'It will break her mother's heart!' I understood that she was only entrusted to Margaret by her earthly parents, not by her Heavenly One. We will guard your secret scrupulously, Mrs. Bolton. My sister is almost broken-hearted. She takes blame to herself for letting the child out of her sight. But, indeed, she never left her in any care but mine, and I loved her dearly."

"And it was last night?"

"Last night. She slept in our room. I never liked her to be with Giles; he is so bad tempered. Will you come and see her little cot, Mrs. Bolton? It will explain things better than I can do."

Beryl followed her to a good-sized, cheerful room on the ground-floor, for the station-master's house was built bungalow-fashion, and only boasted one storey. It was neatly furnished and very cheerful, the two long French windows opening on to a pretty garden, at one end of which was a gate leading to the platform.

Had an older child been missing the fear would have arisen she had wandered on to the line; but a mite of four, without shoes or stockings, could not have attempted such a journey.

"I was away just half-an-hour," said Kate Hall, simply. "I left Birdie fast asleep. If the windows had opened on to the street I might have been alarmed. If it had been a restless, mischievous boy, like Gilly, I should have thought of the garden and the line; but Birdie was not tall enough to reach the

handles of the window; and, besides, I left her fast asleep."

"And when you came back?"

"Margaret was with me. She wanted to see the child, and she came in here with me. My husband had a friend in the parlour, and we were going to have our talk here. The cot was empty. The bedclothes were pulled up carefully, as though to hide the absence of the little sleeper, and a pillow from our own bed was put where Birdie's little form should have rested!"

"Then you think—"

"I think, dear Mrs. Bolton, it was no accident. You need not fear poor little Birdie's having walked in her sleep, and wandered into danger on the line. She did not leave this room alone. She could not have done so, and whoever removed her must have done so with some fixed object. It was not a sudden impulse. Putting the pillow in her cot and drawing the clothes over it all point to a regularly thought-out plan."

Beryl's knees were shaking under her.

"You think, then, that she has been kidnapped? Oh, my baby! would that you were dead, and safe from all the pain and suffering of this cruel world!"

"I think she has been taken away—not kidnapped," corrected Mrs. Hall.

"But they mean the same thing!"

"No. Little Birdie has not been stolen from us for the sake of gain. All her pretty, dainty garments have been left behind. My own idea is—but I hardly like to tell you; you may deem me impertinent."

"Please tell me."

"I think she has been taken by her father's relations."

Beryl started.

"Oh, no! That is not it, I am sure!"

"While I thought the child my sister's I could see no possible explanation," went on Mrs. Hall; "but when I heard she was the daughter of an officer's young widow, who could not have her with her because she lived with an aged relation, I began to form a theory of my own. Some marriages—pardon me—cause much ill-feeling. It might be, I fancied, that your husband's family had disowned you at his death, and offered to provide for the babe if you would give her up. I could fancy a mother's heart refusing such a bargain. Then Meg told me you had warned her to answer no questions, and carefully avoid any discussion of Birdie's beauty; and, somehow, it all seemed to me to bear out my theory."

"It cannot be. Ours was a stolen marriage, and his—his people never knew of it. I lost him before I had been his wife more than a week, and I have never in my life met or written to his family!"

Kate Hall looked perplexed.

"Meg will be here soon. She dreads meeting you. She fears you will reproach her; and yet, though we can't expect you to understand it, it was not her fault."

"I do understand it," said Beryl, in a weary voice, half broken with emotion; "the fault is mine. I ought to have faced my grandfather's displeasure, and owned my child. I ought never to have deserted her, even for an hour!"

Margaret Arnold came in with a strange, downcast air. Evidently, poor woman, she did not seek to gloss over her fault. She looked perfectly overwhelmed by the loss of her little nursing, and to her sister's watchful eyes she seemed almost more wretched than she had done the night before. She took Beryl's hand and pressed it to her lips before she asked, almost hysterically,—

"Can you ever forgive me?"

"There is no question of forgiveness," said Beryl, in her sad, gentle voice. "Dear Mrs. Arnold, whatever my child knew of a mother's love or tenderness she owes to you. I am certain you would have spared me this terrible grief if you could. You would have guarded my darling from all danger as readily as your own son!"

The words, kindly meant, acted as the

cruelest stab. How were Mrs. Hall and Beryl, who both believed Meg a widow, to guess at the brief letter reposing even then in her pocket, which had reached the poor, troubled woman only that morning, and added tenfold to her misery?

"What happened at the station-master's house to-night was done by my orders. Seek to oppose me, and your wretched boy will be the forfeit. He is almost seven years old. After his next birthday I can claim the custody of him, and I will claim it, wretched cripple though he is, if you do aught that can restore the child, Birdie, to her mother."

"YOUR HUSBAND."

Was it a wonder that with this letter in her pocket Margaret Arnold hardly dared to meet the beautiful sad eyes of Beryl Chesney.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Bolton, the real one, not the fair, troubled girl to whom she had lent her name, had by no means an easy task to play when Lord Chesney's lawyer reached the Towers, and asked to see his grandchild. Marion was too truthful to attempt to deceive him; besides, the servants had seen their young lady drive away in a cab, so that, in any case, it would have been impossible to represent her as still at The Towers; so the widow explained quietly her young cousin had been called away to a friend in great trouble, and might be detained with her until the following day.

The lawyer looked displeased.

"With her grandfather lying dead Lady Chesney ought not to be rushing about from one place to another."

Lady Chesney! Marion Bolton thought of the shabby house in Belxton, and the poverty-stricken girl in black. It was but five years ago, and now she was an English peeress. Truly fate played strange pranks at times!

"You cannot call it 'rushing about' to go to a friend who sorely needed her! Remember, Lord Chesney was dead. She could do him no good by remaining here!"

"Still, her leaving the house was unseemly. It looks as though she had only been attentive to him for the sake of what he might do for her, and that, when once this motive was removed she cared nothing for his wishes."

"It is cruel to think so harshly of Beryl!"

"I don't think harshly of her," protested Mr. Grover; "but you know there are a few people who think Mr. Arnison ought to have been the heir, and they will be only too ready to pick holes in Lady Chesney."

Marion Bolton felt a lump in her throat.

"Is Mr. Arnison not the heir? I always feared he would be myself."

"My dear lady, only induce your young kinswoman to make a marriage worthy of her within the next six years, and Master Phil will never touch a shilling of the Chesney wealth!"

"I don't understand."

He explained the will to her very kindly, adding,—

"At the very worst she comes into an immediate legacy of fifty thousand. Supposing she won't marry suitably, why, then, provided she doesn't throw herself away upon an adventurer, she has a thousand a-year for life. Confess, Mrs. Bolton, things are not so bad!"

But poor Marion thought they were quite bad enough.

"I am afraid of Mr. Arnison," she said, helplessly. "I don't like his fate and Beryl's being entangled like this."

"But they aren't! Arnison is a clever fellow, but he can't make Lady Chesney marry him! Neither can he prevent her accepting a suitable lover. Depend upon it, Mrs. Bolton, things will be all right, and the object of our mutual antipathy will find himself discomfited."

"Then you don't like him either?"

"My dear lady, as a lawyer I have no likes

or dislikes. As a private individual I may inform you that I detest him!"

"So do I!"

Mr. Grover looked at her shrewdly, and then put one abrupt question.

"Why?"

"Need one have a reason?"

"Such a kind-hearted woman as you are wouldn't detest anyone without cause; but what I meant was, do you detest him for any fault of his own, or just because he interferes with Lady Chesney's fortune?"

"Oh, I disliked him long before I ever saw her. I used to think he deceived Lord Chesney."

"Pretty thoroughly, I expect. If ever there was an arch hypocrite, it's Mr. Arnison. But he must be a clever fellow, for he contrives to hoodwink most people; and even I, though I know he's bad to the core, should have considerable difficulty in proving it."

"Must he come here?"

"To the funeral certainly. He will expect to be present at the reading of the will."

"When must it be? Beryl begged you would make all arrangements. She did not know, poor child, even if we had a right to stay here; but I told her no one could disturb her till after the funeral."

"No one can disturb her till she's past thirty, or has married beneath her. I think the funeral had better be on Friday."

"So soon!" they were speaking on Tuesday.

"I see no time in delay. Indeed, the sooner Philip Arnison understands his position the better for us all. I will give all necessary orders, and take all trouble off your hands."

He was a kind man, although his manner might be abrupt, and he understood a little the horror with which poor Mrs. Bolton regarded Philip Arnison even before she said, nervously,—

"If only you could stay here until after Friday. Oh, Mr. Grover! I do dread it so. He may come any moment after he gets your telegram, and he will give me no peace until I tell him about the will, and then he will be furious."

It was the long vacation. Walter Grover had been on the point of starting for the Rhine with his wife and girls, but he could not abandon poor Mrs. Bolton to her fate.

In any case he must have remained in England to attend the funeral. He would stretch a point, and stay at Chesney Towers until Friday evening. It would put off his foreign tour till the following week; but to think of those two women at Phil Arnison's mercy was terrible to him.

"Don't fret!" he said, kindly. "I'll telegraph to my wife to send down my portmanteau, and then I'll take up my abode here until I've read the will, and Mr. Arnison knows he can make no claim to the property; but, Mrs. Bolton, Lady Chesney ought to come home. I don't say there is any crime in her being away, but it is unnatural, and will excite comment. If she is not here when Arnison comes, depend upon it he will make unpleasant remarks on her absence. Write to her to-night, and urge her returning at once."

Mrs. Bolton did so. In the tenderest way she pointed out to Beryl the comment her prolonged absence would cause, adding she had good reason to hope her darling was Lord Chesney's heiress, and would be free henceforth to dispose of her life as she pleased.

"Only return at once!" pleaded the widow. "You can start for Glenfríars again on Saturday if you deem it necessary; but come back now, my dear, or you will be giving Philip Arnison a handle against you he knows only too well how to use."

Wednesday passed slowly away. Mr. Grover had sufficient occupation in giving orders for the funeral; and, in fact, in taking on himself all those unpleasant duties which arise on a death in the family. But even he found time to wonder why Philip Arnison had taken no notice of his telegram, while, as

the day wore on, bringing no tidings of Beryl, poor Mrs. Bolton grew almost frantic.

Her darling had promised to write immediately on reaching Glenfríars. In her own letter she had urged her to telegraph the date of her return; but poor Marion had to go to bed in utter ignorance not only of what particular trouble had caused Mrs. Arnold's summons, but also whether Beryl had even reached Garby Junction in safety.

"It is very strange," said Mr. Grover, when they were sitting at breakfast on the Thursday, and poor Mrs. Bolton had been forced to confess she had heard nothing of her kinswoman. "I suppose you are aware of Lady Chesney's address?"

"Certainly. I wrote to her on Tuesday night."

"Do you know the friend who sent for her?"

"Intimately! I was with Beryl when she first met her. I have accompanied her on all her visits to her since. I think it would perhaps be better if I telegraphed to her, and got her to persuade Beryl to return at once!"

"She ought not to need any persuasion, but I think you should send the telegram at once. If you fill up a form I will take it to the office for you!"

But this kind offer was declined. Mr. Grover was a shrewd man, and guessed at once he was to be kept in ignorance of Lady Chesney's whereabouts, and he wondered why.

Somehow, the state of affairs at Chesney Towers did not please him, and why in the world did Philip Arnison keep silent?

That last puzzle was explained by the gentleman in question arriving later that afternoon, and expressing his great regret that his "clerk" had forgotten to forward the telegram.

"I came home early this morning by the merest fluke. I started by the first train, hoping I might be in time for the funeral. I had no idea Lord Chesney was in any danger!"

He made himself so agreeable that even the lawyer was mollified, and kind Mrs. Bolton felt sure she had misjudged him. He showed no unseemly anxiety about the will, and never asked a question respecting its contents; only when Mr. Grover announced that it would be read on the return of the mourners from the funeral, he remarked, thoughtfully,—

"I am thankful Lord Chesney made a will. I always feared myself that he would die intestate, which would cause infinite confusion."

"I don't see that. Of course, in such a case everything would have gone to his grandchild!"

"Exactly; but there are a great many ill-natured people, Mr. Grover, who pretend to doubt that she is his grandchild. Without a will probably one of the American Chesneys would have come over, and put the whole property into Chancery." Then he continued,

"They are hardly to be called relations—a most remote consanguinity. They could never claim the title; but Lord Chesney was a rich man, and depend upon it they would not have let Beryl enjoy his whole property unmolested if he had died intestate. For her sake I am glad there is a will."

"And for your own," suggested Mr. Grover, drily, "since it was the only chance of your benefiting."

"I don't expect to benefit." Mrs. Bolton had withdrawn, and the two men were sitting over their wine. "I fancy Beryl Chesney has taken care of that."

"You mean she dislikes you?"

"She feared me," said Phil, cautiously. "She knew I was about the only person who suspected her secret, and she feared my revealing it to her grandfather."

Mr. Grover looked at him steadily.

"I never thought she had a secret."

"No. Perhaps you don't think it odd she is away from home to day? Possibly it does not strike you as strange that she left her

grandfather's deathbed to travel in hot haste two hundred miles to visit some low born friends?"

"You ought not to speak like that without proof."

"I have ample proof! You say Lord Chesney died on Tuesday morning. Well, on Tuesday at five o'clock I myself saw her in Warwickshire, dressed in colours, and evidently impatient to reach her destination. I offered to get a cab for her, but she refused. Curiosity made me linger about to see what became of her, and I actually saw her taken by one of the porters to the station-master's house. The friend she came to visit was his wife!"

"Some station-masters are above their position, and the wife may have been a lady."

"Of course. Still, to be intimate enough with Lady Chesney to demand a visit from her on the day of her grandfather's death, seemed odd!"

Mr. Grover did not like it at all. A man with old-fashioned notions respecting women, he thought that a girl of Beryl's rank ought never to go out at all unattended, much less travel half over England alone. The more he listened to Mr. Arnison the more perplexed he grew.

"Do you imagine Lady Chesney to be with this—ehem—station-master's wife still, Mr. Arnison?"

"I left Garby on Wednesday morning. I had the curiosity to ask the servant, who was standing at the gate of the station-master's house, whether Miss Chesney was still there. I thought the sound of her title might alarm the rustic mind. The girl grinned from ear to ear, and finally assured me no Miss Chesney had been near the house. I told her I meant the young lady who arrived from London the afternoon before, and she replied 'That was Mrs. Bolton.' I must confess I felt there was something very strange!"

"It must be inquired into," said the lawyer, gravely. "I suppose you can tell me the name of the station?"

"Garby Junction. The station master is a man called Hall." Then he added, "Pray don't mention my name in the matter. Mrs. Bolton dislikes me quite enough already; she would simply hate me if she knew I had enlightened you about her protégée."

Poor Mrs. Bolton had a troubled day. She telegraphed to Mrs. Arnold very briefly, "Please send my young cousin home at once. This is urgent!" but though the message was sent off in the morning no reply came to it, and by night the widow was almost distracted with anxiety.

Even if Birdie were dying—she never thought of any calamity but the child's illness—someone could have sent off a telegram. The blank silence since Beryl left her was alarming.

Meanwhile the preparations for the funeral had all been made. The procession was to leave The Towers at three o'clock on Friday afternoon. Philip Arnison, in right of relationship to the dead man, would fill the place of chief mourner, and many friends and neighbours had expressed their intention of being present.

Most of them would return to The Towers to listen to the will, and if Beryl had not reached home by that time it would be impossible to conceal her absence.

Marion Bolton, who had lived among them for years, knew a little of her neighbour's prejudices. They had never quite forgiven Beryl for being such a contrast to their own wives and daughters.

They had all regarded her as a "foreigner," and many had predicted Lord Chesney would regret his infatuation.

If the new heiress failed to appear among them at the reading of the will, it they learned she had actually left the house the day of her grandfather's death, and never returned to it since, it would so outrage their feelings that she would never be able to hold her own among them.

She might be Lady Chesney of The Towers, a wealthy heiress, and a professed beauty; but to these simple country gentry she would always be an alien and an outcast. They would never be friends with her, never show her kindly feeling, never welcome her as one of them if she excited their prejudice now.

Respect to the dead was an unwritten law among them, and Beryl Chesney would wantonly have broken it. Poor Mrs. Bolton wished, from the bottom of her heart, that she had started for Glenfriars on Thursday morning, and brought Beryl back with her by main force if needs were. Anything in the world would have been better than her absence now.

And though not a clever woman, she was quick enough to see that this absence had already done Beryl harm with the lawyer. There was a sarcastic ring in Walter Grover's voice that morning as he inquired,—

"Any news of Lady Chesney?" which cut her to the quick.

The lawyer had not telegraphed to Mrs. Hall. His doubts of Philip Arnsion had returned after their interview, and he had reflected the story might have been trumped up out of jealousy. No, he would wait and hear Beryl's own account before he judged her; only if she was not in time for her grandfather's funeral, he knew she would sink in his esteem.

"What is to be done?" Mrs. Bolton asked him timidly, on that terrible Friday morning. "Nothing. Lady Chesney disregards alike your letters and telegrams; there is no use in sending more. Besides, if she started at once she would not arrive in time now. You can do nothing but wait and see."

"There is a train in at twelve; she may come by that!" suggested Philip Arnsion.

The sad preparations went on, the cold collation was laid for the guests.

Mrs. Bolton felt thankful she was not expected to appear among them until their return from the funeral.

There was a sound of wheels, of footsteps passing and repassing, and then all was still. All that was mortal of the late Lord Chesney had left the home of his ancestors for that last, still resting-place in the family vault.

A strange presentiment seized Mrs. Bolton, as she listened to the tolling bell, that Beryl was in trouble. Up to that moment she had never dreamed of harm befalling her. Indeed, she had felt almost indignant at the girl's carelessness in leaving her so long without news, but now all this was changed.

She seemed to know that Beryl was in trouble and wanted her. She could see the girl's beautiful face turned towards her in agonised pleading; and it dawned on her like a flash of lightning that her darling was staying away not through thoughtlessness, or even over-anxiety for Birdie, but simply because some power stronger than herself was keeping her. It was not her will, but another's that made her still absent from Chesney Towers.

She could not have explained it. She knew quite well Mr. Grover would not believe her, and would call it a nervous fancy, while Philip Arnsion would reply with a mocking smile.

But Marion Bolton did not mind this. She herself was satisfied of Beryl's innocence. She had suffered an agony of doubt while she thought her child was wilfully distressing her. Now all was changed.

Beryl was in trouble, and to-morrow she would start in search of her and bring her home.

An interval of silence. All the servants had gone to the funeral except one under housemaid, who was suffering from cold, and had been forbidden by the doctor to venture out. Presently this girl came slowly upstairs and knocked at Mrs. Bolton's door.

"What is it, Susan?"

"Please, ma'am, the postman's just been, and seeing this letter was marked 'urgent,' I thought I had better bring it up, though it's addressed to Miss Beryl."

The second post had come in. Mrs. Bolton

recognised the Glenfriars postmark, and the peculiarly distinct hand of Margaret Arnold. She knew quite well the letter was meant for her, since at Glenfriars she and Beryl had exchanged their names. It seemed ages to her before the last sound of Susan's footsteps died away, and she was free to open her treasure.

Alas! it gave nothing but additional pain to her gentle heart.

"DEAR MADAM,—Your telegram has only just reached me. I cannot understand it at all, for Mrs. Bolton left Garby quite early on Wednesday morning. She told me she was urgently needed at home, and was content to leave the search for our darling in my brother-in-law's hands. I myself saw her into the train, and I had a telegram from her on her reaching London, begging me to wire to The Towers as soon as we had news.—Yours faithfully,

"MARGARET ARNOLD"

What did it mean? Beryl had evidently been sent for, not on account of her child's illness, but because the little one had disappeared. The poor girl must have been almost heartbroken when the news greeted her; yet she had fulfilled her promise to the letter.

She had said whatever happened she would write or return on Wednesday, and here was proof positive she had left Garby on that day.

Mrs. Bolton burnt the letter over a candle, for alas! it told too much to suffer other eyes to rest upon it. Then, poor woman, she sat down and tried to realise what had happened. Beryl had left Garby on Wednesday morning, and now some fifty hours later she had not reached home? What did it mean? Where was the beautiful girl who had been the cherished darling of Chesney Towers? How was she to be found and told of her heiress-ship?

A sudden noise. Mrs. Bolton started, but it was only the first of the long line of carriages returning from the funeral. She smoothed out the crepe folds of her dress, and went down to the library with an aching heart.

(To be continued.)

ALETHEA'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XVII.—(continued.)

BEYOND the door was a stone staircase in the wall, and the woman hastened to ascend, first shutting the picture-door.

The stairs were many, the Castle rooms being all lofty, and there were two flights with a small landing between.

Alison proceeded no further up than this landing, but, turning aside, opened a door on her right, gaining admittance into a suite of rooms that were worthy of a fairy prince.

They were as large and lofty as those underneath, and, like them, consisted of two saloons, a clove for a bed, bath room, and dressing-room, &c.

They were lighted during the day by finely latticed windows, looking upon lawn, wood, and garden, and by night by pendant lamp, whose mellow light filtered through glass globes. There were shutters and damask curtains to prevent a single beam of artificial light from straying without; and it was not therefore to be wondered at that the occupancy of these tower chambers was a secret to everyone.

The walls of one room were panelled with polished oak, so dark that it might have been ebony. The wainscoting of the other was concealed by draperies of warm hued silk that fell in graceful folds from the ceiling to the floor.

The rooms were carpeted with the matchless productions of the clumsy Persian loom, and the pictures they presented rivalled the gems upon the walls. Here and there their surface was obscured by leopard skins, beauti-

fully spotted, or by magnificent white furs, more spotless than when they encoased the animals who gave them up with their lives.

The furniture was of the richest and most delicate description, and there was a profusion of fresh flowers in the vases, of new books upon the hanging-shelves and little tables, and of beautiful new toys everywhere, showing that the most assiduous care was constantly exercised that the boy-proprietor might not tire of his home.

In the inner chamber of the suite, in a low chair, was seated, at the moment of Alison's entrance, Miss Wycherly, with her boy still clasped tightly to her breast.

The look of alarm had not yet vanished from her face, and her voice trembled, as she looked up, saying,—

"Well, Alison?"

"His lordship has gone, my lady!"

"I am glad of it! I cannot tell you what I suffered, Alison, as I lingered to hear what he said. I made my escape at the right moment. I do not see how he dared enter my rooms! Oh, if I had only a father or a brother! If the late Earl were only alive! If I had only some one to whom I could appeal for protection!"

"There is the present Earl, my lady. He could not refuse to defend his kinswoman—"

Miss Wycherly shook her head sadly.

"Mr. Montmar—"

"No—no. I must bear my own trials. You forget, as I did but now—that to obtain their protection, it would be necessary to state why I fear the Marquis. That I can never do! If I were once tempted to do so, they would scorn and blame me—perhaps disown me. No, Alison, I must bury the trials I endure in my own breast. It will not be for ever!"

The beautiful boy in Miss Alethea's arms had not been inattentive to these remarks, and he now raised himself up, inquiring earnestly,—

"What troubles you so, mamma? Can't Papa Richard take care of you from the bad man you fear so?"

"Yes, Arthur, I hope so. But if you cannot, you will soon be old enough to defend me," and the young mother smiled fondly through her tears upon her son.

"Who is this bad man, mamma, who hates both you and me? Is he the one I saw at the cottage?"

"Yes, darling!"

"I didn't think he looked very bad," said Arthur, musingly—"at any rate, not like a poacher!"

Miss Wycherly smiled again, amused at her boy's idea of wickedness. Poaching was the only crime of which Arthur had a practical knowledge, and he had seen a poacher once.

"I pitied him," continued the little fellow, "and so I couldn't help kissing him!"

That simple sentence brought tears to Miss Alethea's eyes, and she drew her son closer, bestowing caresses upon him.

"You kissed the Marquis, Master Arthur?" cried Alison, shocked and troubled. "I should have thought you would have known better. Why, your life wouldn't be safe with him—"

"Hush, Alison!" interrupted her mistress.

"Do not talk to Arthur like that. Let him think the world all beautiful and its inhabitants all good while he may. The time will come soon enough when he will learn the bitter truth. Perhaps," she added, "that childlike kiss may soften his lordship's heart, and he may go away and leave me in peace!"

"He didn't act as if his heart was much softened," declared the waiting-woman. "He thought Mr. Layne was in your boudoir, and he looked fierce enough to have killed you if he had seen you. He said he thought he heard a child's voice saying, 'Papa Richard!' What difference would it make to him if he had? It would have been none of his business—"

"Then he suspects Arthur's presence here?" murmured Miss Wycherly in distress.

"I should judge so, my lady, from what his lordship said;"

"Perhaps I had better let Mr Layne take charge of Arthur, Allison. He is desirous of doing so, and of introducing him as his adopted son. I have for years looked forward to such an event, yet as the time approaches I shrink from taking the irrevocable step. I do not want to give my boy up so entirely, never to see him except as a visitor of an hour, never to take him in my arms or to hear him call me mother! I must teach him to call me by another name when I send him from me—oh, Arthur!"

The young mother bowed her head up on her boy's curls, and wept unrestrainedly.

Allison made no attempt to comfort her, giving way to her own grief, but the lad kissed Miss Alethea with childish tenderness, and embraced her, declaring that he would never leave her even to go with Papa Richard, and that he would never call her by any other name than his dearest mother.

Alarmed by his tears and sobs, Miss Alethea banished all expression of her own sorrows, and set herself to allaying the storm she had aroused.

"You will do what mamma wants you to, I am very sure, Arthur," she said. "If I decide to send you to Papa Richard, you will go quietly, knowing that you are making me happy, won't you?"

Master Arthur reserved his decision, and Miss Alethea exclaimed,—

"Ah! I had forgotten what Papa Richard gave in the corridor for you. Here it is!"

She drew from her pocket a letter without address, and gave it to the lad, who hastened with boyish delight to open it and peruse its contents.

It was a long letter, full of sportive allusions and pleasant promises, filled with instruction so given as to be eagerly relished—just the letter to delight an imaginative and very intellectual boy like Arthur.

Miss Wycherly read it over the boy's shoulder, hating his joy, and when they came to the signature, she said,—

"Not many boys have a 'Papa Richard' like you, my darling. You are very fortunate!"

"I know it, mamma. But I am more fortunate in having you! I wish I could be always with you, that I need never be away from you one minute! Oh, wouldn't it be jolly then?" and Arthur's eyes sparkled. "Somehow, mamma," he added, thoughtfully, "I don't seem to have any right to you! You steal up here, as if you were afraid to be seen, and you are afraid somebody may see me. Heaven! I got as much right to you as Johnny Perkins has to his mother!"

"Yes, yes, my boy!"

"But why don't Papa Richard live here just as John Perkins lives with Nurse Mary?"

"I can't explain it to you now, Arthur," answered Miss Wycherly, in a pained tone. "I must not even think! When you are older you shall know all these things that puzzle you now. Heaven grant you may cling to your mother then! But let us solve your Chinese puzzle, my boy. It is a pleasant puzzle than those you have been trying to understand!"

Arthur brought his Oriental toy, and Miss Wycherly, dismissing her cares and griefs, gave herself up to the sweet task of amusing her son. They bent their heads together over the tiny bits of carved ivory, their laughter mingling, while Allison looked with affectionate interest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This strained passion doth you wrong, my lord;
Sweet Earl, divorce not wisdom from your honour
—*Shakespeare.*

No thought within her bosom stirs
But wakes some feeling dark and dread;
Heaven keep thee from a doom like hers,
Of living when the hopes are dead

—*Phæbe Carey*

THE Castle clock had long since told the hour of midnight. The guests had retired to

their chambers and their beds, and silence and darkness brooded heavily over the scene.

The lights had nearly all died out from the central building, but faint gleams issuing from the latticed windows of each of the towers announced that Miss Wycherly and Lady Leopold had not yet retired.

These indications of wakefulness were regarded with joy and relief by Natalie Atton, who glided among the trees dotting the lawn like a perturbed spirit, anxious, yet fearing to enter the Castle.

After her interview with Hugh Fauld, Natalie had returned to the hidden cottage, more than ever oppressed by a terrible sense of shame and suffering.

During the hours that had followed, she had brooded over her wrongs until the determination had sprung up, Minerva-like, in her soul, to have a full explanation with her traitor husband that very night, and settle her fate for ever.

"Better to know the worst!" she murmured, as she wandered in and out among the trees. "He cannot have utterly ceased to love me. If I plead to him, he may consent to do me justice. And I cannot live this way any longer. I must know if Hugh Fauld is right, and I am neither maid, wife, nor widow!"

Calming herself, she stole towards the eastern tower, and entered by one of the long glass doors, purposely left unsecured by Alison Murray.

She then ascended the private staircase, and rapped at the door at the top of the little landing.

The waiting-woman admitted her.

"We expected you to night, Miss Atton," she said, as she ushered the poor young wife into Miss Wycherly's presence.

The lady greeted Natalie kindly, inquired how she liked the hidden cottage and its inmates, and finally said,—

"I thought it very probable, Natalie, that you would return to-night for an interview with the Earl. I have no objections to your visiting his rooms, for I believe you to be legally his wife. After you have talked with him, do not forget to let Lady Leopold and myself know the result! for, as you are aware, the family honour is at stake in this matter, and we are greatly interested, apart from the regard we have conceived for you."

Natalie readily promised, and, somewhat encouraged, set out upon her momentous mission.

Quitting the ante-chamber and emerging into the corridor, she was about to proceed stealthily along when she observed a dark figure in the window-seat.

This figure belonged to Lord Waldemere, and he seemed to be keeping watch and ward upon the eastern tower.

Natalie was startled, and was tempted to turn back and apprise Miss Alethea of her discovery, but she reflected that this watcher's vigil might be known to Miss Wycherly. Besides, there was something so inexpressibly mournful in the attitude of the Marquis, that the girl's heart was touched in his behalf, and she thought,—

"He probably sleeps in one of the neighbouring rooms, and came to look out into the night from the great window. He has some great trouble too, I am sure."

The Marquis looked at the young girl narrowly, but, satisfied that she was Lady Leopold, did not arise from his seat or address one word to her. On the contrary, he turned his gaze to the window, as if he had sought the corridor for no other purpose than to obtain a view therefrom.

Reassured by his manner, and convinced by his attire that he was a guest at the Castle, Natalie turned into the nearest passage, and hastened towards the grand staircase, which was composed of several flights, conducting from the lower hall to the topmost floor, with broad landings between.

Ascending to the third floor, she sped along the wide gallery, turned into a narrower corri-

dor, and then into another, reaching at length the western tower.

With her hand upon the knob of Lord Templecombe's door, her courage failed her for a moment, and her heart throbbed fiercely. Conquering her weakness by a strong effort, she opened the door and entered the chamber.

A lamp upon the centre table burned dimly, and by the feeble light Natalie observed, as she leaned against the closed door, a scene of confusion characteristic of her husband. His elegant dressing case lay open upon the toilet table, its silver fittings scattered here and there; his garments were strewn carelessly about, as if he stepped from them into his bed; and upon the table were bottles and glasses, showing that he had indulged in what the old-timed gentlemen termed a "night-cap" before retiring.

The Earl was sleeping in the alcove, his heavy breathing almost startling his easily alarmed young wife; but, as he showed no signs of awakening, she glided forward, turned up the light and approached the bedside, regarding him attentively.

His face was flushed, giving relief to the faded look resulting from the light colour of hair, eyebrows, and complexion, and one of his arms was thrown carelessly upon the dainty satin coverlet.

How often she had seen him thus!

How often she had watched his slumbers!

But never as now, with indignant and sorrowful feelings welling up and struggling for the mastery in her soul!

Never as now, with detestation and scorn striving to quench the last spark of the love she had borne him.

She felt no return of the olden tenderness as she looked down upon that sleeper, and memory recalled the many times that head had been pillowed upon her breast and those slumbers had been taken in her enfolding arms! Instead, her lip curled with scorn for him and scorn for herself that she should ever have yielded her heart to his control and her soul to his guidance.

For a few moments she stood motionless, looking upon him with gathering resolution, her refined and usually gentle face acquiring a look of sternness that made her seem an incarnate Nemesis, and then she laid her cold hand upon his forehead.

The touch disturbed him, and he stirred uneasily.

"Wake up, Elmer," she said, not removing her hand. "Wake quickly!"

The words, and her pressure on his brow, aroused the Earl, who yawned, stretched out his limbs, and opened his eyes, his gaze resting upon Natalie.

Scarcely awake, he fancied himself in the cottage near the Grange, and he betrayed no surprise at his wife's presence, but murmured a pet name she had once loved.

Natalie heard it with impatience and rising anger.

"Wake up," she repeated, sternly. "You are not at the cottage, Elmer Keyes, but at Wycherly Castle."

The Earl started and sprang up, uttering an exclamation of dismay, as a full comprehension of the scene burst upon his awakening senses.

"Why are you here, Natalie?" he cried. "Didn't I tell you the other night to leave this neighbourhood unless you would ruin me? How did you get into the Castle? How did you find my room?"

"Easily enough. I got in through an unsecured window. I saw you at your window the other evening, and so learned your chamber. I have come here to obtain a full understanding of my position in regard to you!"

The Earl was bewildered by her determined manner as well as by her unexpected presence in his apartment, and fearing she might make a scene and arouse the inmates of the Castle, he answered, soothingly,—

"Why, of course, you are my wife, Natalie, my own wife!"

"But your letter——"

"I wrote that because—because—why, merely as a joke! I wanted to test your love for me!" declared the Earl, delighted at the cleverness of his excuse.

"Having tested it then, you are willing to acknowledge me as your wife?"

"Why, no, Natalie. The same obstacles exist now as when we were married," was the embarrassed response. "My father, you know, has other views for me, and I am dependant upon him, and—"

"Do not trouble yourself for other excuses," interrupted the young wife, with flashing eyes and curling lip. "Do not pollute your soul by further falsehood, my lord!"

"My lord! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I know who you are! You have pretended to be Elmer Keyes, and the dependent son of a poor gentleman. Was not that the story? And all the time you were rich, with houses and lands and rent-rolls, and with an ancient name. You had no one to control your movements, as you well know, save your own lawless will. Do I not know you now Earl of Templecombe?"

His lordship looked astonished, dismayed, and wrathful, as he thus found himself known to Natalie, and his reply was incoherent and unintelligible, his voice being choked with passion.

"You see I have fathomed your carefully kept secret," continued Natalie, coolly. "You never were more mistaken than in thinking I would tamely submit to my wrongs at your hands. When I received your last letter I was a weak and loving child; now I am a woman determined to battle for and obtain her rights!"

Lord Templecombe gave some minutes to reflection.

His soul was convulsed with alarm at the prospect before him, now that Natalie had become aroused against him, and he thought of various plans by which to silence her. Violence was the first thing that suggested itself, but his cowardly soul was not prepared for that, and he resolved to subdue her by a feigned affection, and induce her to return to the Grange, if possible.

Sitting up erect in his bed, he assumed a reproachful look, and exclaimed,—

"I will not deny my rank and wealth, Natalie, since you have discovered them. You have done very wrong to pry into a secret which, for various reasons, your husband has thought best to keep from you for a time. Do you call your conduct wisely? Have you shown a wisely obedience to my wishes?"

"But you said I was not your wife!"

"I repeat, I only said that to try your affection. So long as you show proper regard to my commands, you are my wife!"

"Cease, Elmer," cried Natalie. "Before you talk farther in that strain, I want to tell you that I have discovered the loss of our marriage register, and that I fully understand who abstracted it, and why. You know well that you have no intention of introducing me as your Countess. Yet I will accept no other terms from you!"

"You must be a lunatic," returned his lordship, throwing off the thin mask of affection he had assumed. "I am willing to support you handsomely, to allow you a good income, but I have no intention of acknowledging you as my wife!"

"But that is what I claim—what I demand!"

"Your impudence is unparalleled! Do you imagine that the Earl of Templecombe is such a parish in his own circles of society that he must stoop to yours for a bride?"

"Then why did you marry me, Elmer?"

"Because," declared the Earl, recklessly and truthfully, "I could win you in no other way. I was bewitched by your pretty face, so like another I know and love—and when I offered you my love you were so innocent that you could understand nothing but marriage. I thought the matter over a long time, undecided what to do. I perfectly understood that a form of marriage was necessary, and I pro-

posed to my man Roke to officiate as clergyman. There was objections to such a step, the principal one being that we could not obtain possession of the church long enough for our purpose without the presence of some person connected with it. And so we had a private marriage by the clergyman—but the marriage was illegal, on account of my assumed name!"

"But if you knew it to be illegal, why did you subvert the leaf of the register?"

"To put the matter beyond all doubt, and to prevent your making me trouble. The clergyman who married us is dead. So I have matters all my own way!"

The stern look faded from Natalie's face, and she leaned forward and asked, with a strange mixture of eagerness and solemnity,—

"Elmer, tell me, as you hope for mercy at the last great day, did you never love me?"

The Earl forced a laugh.

"I suppose I did," he answered, "I fancied you at least, but you must see that I never loved you enough to make you my legal wife. You loved me and that was enough. It was certainly very delightful," he added, complacently, "to be loved for myself alone, and in such a fervent, self-sacrificing way. It has exalted my self-esteem amazingly!"

Natalie groaned.

"Don't take the affair so to heart, Natalie. You certainly could not expect—to think the matter over coolly—that I would acknowledge you. Why, your uncle is only a yeoman, who tills the soil for his bread. And your mother—that would be the hardest part of it! I couldn't own that my wife bore her mother's maiden name, because that mother had none other to bestow upon her! Of all the families in the country yours would be the last with which I should choose an alliance. You are a fitter bride for Roke than me!"

Natalie's eyes flashed indignantly at this insult.

"Take care," Elmer, she said; "I will not bear such words from your lips! You shall respect your wife—at least in words!"

"My wife! Disabuse yourself of that notion, Natalie. The sooner you do, the sooner you'll be happy. Go home to Afton Grange, and I will give you a handsome dowry, and you can marry Hugh Fauld and queen it among your neighbours. Refuse, and announce your claims upon me, and I will denounce you as a lunatic, or as a woman who wishes to levy black-mail upon me!"

The Earl spoke determinedly, and his poor young wife began to realize the obstacles in her path, and to see that if she would obtain justice it could not be done by denunciations and loud outcry.

She must proceed carefully, working, as weak and defenceless creatures always do, with cunning and stratagem.

"Elmer," she replied, as calmly as she could "speak no more to me of Hugh Fauld! He is nothing to you nor to me. It would have been better, perhaps, if I had married him, but I threw away his priceless love for a worthless fancy, and the fate I have earned I meet! I am bound to while we both shall live, and I will never relinquish my claims. I will prevent any second marriage on your part by declaring truth to the lady you may win!"

The Earl muttered a malediction.

"You said, Elmer, that I look like one you love. You mean Lady Leopold, your cousin?"

"The—! Where did you learn her name?"

"I inquired of a woodman when I saw you out with a party of riders. I do look like her ladyship, but I am only a copy, while she is the splendid original. When you came to the Grange, did you love Lady Leopold?"

"Yes. I have loved her ever since I knew her. Since you know so much, you may as well know the rest. Lady Leopold Wycherly will be my bride!"

"But she does not love you. I mean her ladyship looked more tenderly upon the hand-

some, dark-eyed gentleman who rode at her other side. Mr. Montmaur the woodman called him."

"He is her relative, as well as I, and she must bestow some attention upon him. She will marry me, as I have said. And was he to you if you attempt to poison her mind against me! You would not be believed by her ladyship; and you would find that my vengeance would be swift and sure!"

His lordship scowled darkly as he thus threatened, and Natalie began to have some perception that there were depths in his soul of which had never before formed even a suspicion.

She shuddered before the look he gave her, as if she had stood upon the brink of an awful precipice, and gazed down into an impenetrable and terrible abyss.

But she did not falter in her resolution.

If she permitted him to cast her upon the world, homeless and nameless, what might be her fate?

Honour and happiness lay only through a recognition of her marriage, and she was determined to obtain it, if she must yield up her life at the moment of doing so.

"I will make no promise, Elmer—Vane I mean!" she said. "No fear of your cowardly vengeance shall deter me from what I feel to be just and right. I am sure, if I seek it, I can obtain an interview with her ladyship, and she will befriend me. Think over what I have said to you. Perhaps you may decide that it will be wise for you to yield to my demands!"

"Never! Where are you staying, Natalie? at the village inn?"

"No. My residence I prefer to keep secret."

"Are you using my name in any way?"

"I have not yet done so. I do not ask to call myself a Countess, Vane. Heaven knows that in my love for you there never entered a grain of calculation. I would have worked to aid in our mutual support! I do not want your money or your title, but I do want recognition as your wife!"

As Natalie showed an inclination to give way to tears, the Earl began to urge her to accede to his demands. As she continued to refuse to return to Afton Grange, he pictured a pleasant retreat in the country somewhere, where she should pass as a young widow.

adding,—

"With your beauty and the income I would bestow upon you, there is no doubt but you might impose upon some person of great respectability, and marry him. You might win a wealthy gentleman, even a titled one—"

The insulted wife interrupted him by a gesture.

"Do not tempt me farther to denounce you on the spot," she said, with a certain majesty.

"I shall leave you now, Lord Templecombe, but I shall return again. Until you agree to do me justice, I will dog your every footsteps, and will appear to you at moments when you least expect it! By day and by night I will come to your side, and you shall not know a minute's peace from my importunities. And if you then continue to refuse me, I will denounce you openly. Do not think I love you now! I believe it is hatred I feel for you!"

She turned—as the Earl pleaded for her to remain, and conjured her by her past love, which he knew must still linger in her heart, to grant his desires—and swept from the apartment with a haughtily defiant air.

He sank back on his pillow alarmed and almost paralysed with wrath, wondering what he should do to avert the danger with which she threatened him.

As Natalie passed through the corridors, she stumbled inadvertently, and the sound brought Basil Montmaur to his door.

He was not seen by the young girl, and he regarded her with surprise and sorrow, believing her, as before, to be his betrothed.

As she passed on, he remembered Leopold's declaration that it was not her whom he had beheld entering Lord Templecombe's room.

and he noiselessly stole after Natalie to see whether she was about to proceed.

"She must be asleep," he thought, in an agony of distress. "She has been to Vane's room to-night. I must convince her to-morrow that she is a somnambulist?"

He followed her downstairs towards Lady Leopold's chambers, every moment deepening his conviction that she was his betrothed. He feared to approach her too closely, lest he should awaken her, and his movements were very subdued, almost noiseless.

As Natalie approached the tower chambers, one of the doors opened, and Lady Leopold herself, to Basil's utter bewilderment, appeared on the threshold. She saw only the midnight visitress, and, with words of endearment, folded her arms around poor Natalie, drawing her into her lighted rooms. Doubting the evidence of his senses, and plunged into a state of stupefaction at the appearance of a second Lady Leopold, Basil could only stare at the door which had been closed almost in his face.

CHAPTER XIX.

Like a man to doubt business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin.
—Shakespeare.

THE remainder of the night, that had been broken in upon by the visit of Natalie Afton to his chamber, was spent by Lord Templecombe in anxious reflection. Notwithstanding his declarations to the contrary, he was troubled and annoyed because his true name and position had become known to his poor young wife, whom he anathematised for what he had termed her officiousness and curiosity. Fears lest she might declare her wrongs to Lady Leopold entered his mind, and at length he muttered,—

"I used to wonder how people could ever be so foolish as to commit capital crimes; but I wonder no longer. It is not so difficult to goad a man on to the perpetration of a deed from which he would have shrunk at another time. I feel almost as if I—"

He paused, with a shudder, not daring to complete the sentence or the thought.

As he had said, he had never really loved Natalie Afton. He had been fascinated by her habitual reserve and air of defiance, and by her singular resemblance to Lady Leopold Wycherly, and had entertained for her a passing fancy, which, while it lasted, took the semblance of a pure and strong passion.

There was too, a vein of romance in his lordship's nature, and the mystery enveloping the young girl, her reclusion from the world, the secrecy necessary to his courtship of her, and the circumstances attending their life at the cottage he had hired, all had tended to keep alive his fancy for her until a late period, and caused him to regard his summer spent in the neighbourhood of Afton Grange as one of the pleasantest in his life.

He had found it necessary to go through a form of marriage with Natalie, but he had so managed affairs that proof of the ceremony could never be obtained. He had persuaded himself at first that his assumed name would render the union illegal, and afterwards, on learning the death of the clergyman, he had sent his unscrupulous valet to Falconbridge with orders to abstract the page of the register on which his marriage was recorded. With assurance thus made doubly sure, he had not hesitated, when he began to tire of her, to despatch the cruel letter we have seen to his young wife, and accustom himself to regard his conduct to her as decidedly clever.

Something of this self-admiration now returned to him after several anxious hours, and brought with it an easier state of mind.

"After all," he thought, rather complacently, "I've done nothing so very wrong. 'Tisn't every young fellow who can carry on such a little romance without declaring his name or wealth. 'Tisn't every one who can be loved for himself alone as I have been! Why,

a word from me to-night would have brought Natalie to my feet! But of course I would not speak it. I can't have her here interfering with my plans with regard to Leopold. I think I have frightened her away effectually. I have been assuredly foolish to fear her, or to dream of violence towards her!"

Fears alternated with hopes in the mind of the Earl during the remainder of the dark hours, and when morning came he had resolved to partially communicate his difficulties to his most intimate friend and adviser, Sir Wilton Werner, and obtain his counsel upon the subject now engrossing all his thoughts.

At the breakfast-table he was gay and more animated than usual, but when the guests separated, going whither they listed, his lordship drew the Baronet's arm within his own, and conducted him to the portrait gallery.

"What troubles you this morning, Templecombe?" asked Sir Wilton, as they entered the long, wide chamber, and began pacing the mosaic floor, their movements apparently watched and followed by the pictured eyes of a long line of Wycherlys. "What mental disturbance kept you sleepless last night?"

"How do you know that I was sleepless?" demanded his lordship, in a tone of surprise. "And if I were, why should you attribute the fact to a 'mental disturbance'?"

"I am skilled in the art of reading men's souls through their faces," answered the Baronet, carelessly. "Your gaiety at the table did not cover from my scrutiny the fact that you were pale and hollow-eyed, and that your manner was nervous. My penetration assured me that these were the signs of mental, not physical illness. Having thus removed from myself all suspicions of dealing in the black art, I am ready to listen to the communication you intend to make me."

"As you read my purpose so accurately, Werner, I may as well proceed, unless, indeed, your penetration will enable you to possess yourself of my story without my aid," said the Earl, feigning an indifference he did not feel.

Sir Wilton signified his willingness to listen, and to assist his friend, if necessary, by his counsel; but his lordship found it difficult to enter upon the narration.

For some time they paced to and fro in silence, the Earl pondering upon the best mode of relating his story, and the Baronet furtively watching him, and forming his own sagacious conclusions as to the importance of his lordship's secret.

At length, Lord Templecombe forced a laugh, and said,—

"I am really making a formidable affair out of nothing! The truth is, my dear Werner, I have been profiting by some of your instructions—imitating some of your youthful freaks. You've told me so often of your wildness in your younger days that I have been tempted to follow in your steps, and lay up a few amusing memories to relate years hence!"

This statement was truthful enough. Had he never known Sir Wilton, Lord Templecombe might have been a better man. He was not possessed of a strong mind, and was therefore completely guided by the Baronet, whose influence over him, unhappily, was most detrimental to any good that he actually possessed. Under the skilful management of Sir Wilton, the evil in the Earl's nature had been carefully fostered until it had completely overshadowed, if not destroyed, whatever of noble impulses nature had given him, and his own selfish desires had become the law of his being.

The Baronet arched his brows, as he listened to his friend's declaration, and responded,—

"You do not mean that you have just initiated a career of wildness, Templecombe? Why, for years you have been regarded as a very dissipated young gentleman—"

"Ever since my acquaintance with you, Werner," interrupted the Earl, good-humouredly.

"I conclude that you have been engaging in something that may cause you serious annoy-

ance. Be perfectly frank, and you may claim my assistance, should you think it of any avail."

Thus encouraged, his lordship said,—
"You remember, Werner, that I started to make a tour of the kingdom last summer. In the course of my travels, I came upon a pretty secluded hamlet in a distant county. Although the scenery around it was unusually lovely, and I was already tired of my undertaking, I should have remained there but a day or two, had I not chanced to encounter a young girl, who interested me strangely. She was very beautiful, but as shy as a fawn, and, with a veil of mystery surrounding her, she seemed to me inexpressibly charming."

"Of course! But I thought your heart had been given to Lady Leopold?"

"I did not really love this country girl, Werner. She looked very like my aristocratic cousin. You needn't smile so derisively, for I assure you it would be hard to distinguish between them. The only difference was in their eyes, Natalie's being blue, and in Natalie's lack of sparkling freshness that characterises the countenance of Lady Leopold. But Natalie's naturally gentle face always wore a defiant look, as if she stood at bay from the whole world!"

"Natalie!" mused the Baronet, as if committing the name to memory. "Of course you made the acquaintance of this lovely being, whom you did not love?"

"I did, and was fascinated by her—so much so that I lingered in the vicinity of her home the entire summer, reading poetry with her—she was passionately fond of poetry—teaching her music, and dreaming away the days, quite forgetful of any existence beyond that simple, quiet life. She was an apt scholar in music, and in love, for I taught her to love me with all the ardour of her innocent nature!"

"Taught her to love your title, you mean, Templecombe. Her nature was probably not so innocent but that she could speculate upon the chances of becoming a Countess and the mistress of your estates. Pretty country girls are not necessarily unambitious!"

"Very true, but Natalie knew nothing of my real self. She knew me under an assumed name, as the younger son of a gentleman, with my way to make in the world, and she would have been delighted to share my supposed privations and poverty."

The Baronet checked his steps, regarding his companion earnestly, and exclaiming,—

"Do you mean to declare, Templecombe, that you really won the heart of a lovely young girl while pretending to be poor and unknown?"

"I do. I see nothing very surprising in the fact, Werner. She thought me the handsomest man she had ever beheld, and my accomplishments awoke in her a feeling of profound respect and even veneration!"

Sir Wilton thought in his own soul that a girl who could think the Earl handsome could have had few opportunities to study beauty.

"I suppose," he said, mustily, "that she was brought up among country bores, and neglected by them until a kind word was sufficient to awake her very soul. You were probably her first lover!"

"She had another—although I believe she did not then know it. He was a neighbouring farmer, and I used to meet him sometimes during my walks, when he would scowl fiercely at me. Once even, he had the audacity to stop me and bring me to task for my conduct. To come to the point, I—I pretended to marry the girl!"

"I hope you managed the affair cleverly?"

"Very. My valet was an invaluable assistant, as he always is. I had taken a cottage near Natalie's home, and we dreamed away the summer, the girl becoming more and more devoted to me each day. With the coming of autumn, I left her, but went back again and again to visit her during the following seasons."

"You were very constant!"

"Only for a time. I made up my mind a few weeks ago that I must rid myself of her before proposing to Lady Leopolde, and I wrote to her that I had given up the cottage, that she was not my wife, and that my name and position were unknown to her!"

"A foolish step! Why, that letter would have infuriated some women, and they would have set about discovering your identity without delay!"

"You have described precisely its effect upon Natalie. She left her home, went to town, got sight of Roke, and tracked him to the Castle."

"To the Castle? This becomes interesting! Proceed!"

"She is in the neighbourhood now, though where I do not know. I have seen her twice. Last night she actually penetrated to my rooms and waked me up, demanding to be recognised as my wife. She had heard something about Lady Leopolde, and threatened, if I remember rightly, to tell her the whole story. If she were to do that, I may as well cease to hope, for my cousin would not regard this affair in the proper light, I am sure. I threatened, in return, to denounce her as a lunatic, and I will do it if she causes me trouble."

"Well thought of. But you should prevent any encounter between her ladyship and this girl. Her resemblance to Lady Leopolde may gain her the friendship of your cousin. Besides, having truth on her side, she cannot fail to make a better impression than you! How can I assist you in this matter?"

"You can uphold my story, and assert that you know the girl to be a lunatic who claims every handsome fellow as her husband. I don't see why you smile at that. Or, you might frighten Natalie away. Try and think of some plan by which to relieve me of my difficulties!"

"I must have a little time for reflection. Perhaps you have frightened the girl away already!"

"Oh, no, I have not. She threatened to dog my steps until I render her justice, and she meant what she said. She will come upon me whenever I am alone—in the park, the gardens, or my own chamber. She may not avenge herself upon me by stabbing me in my sleep," added the Earl, nervously. "I shall never feel safe while she remains in the neighbourhood!"

"Nonsense," said Sir Wilton, lightly; "a woman's love does not so readily turn to hate, and your innocent country girl will not be in any hurry to denounce or injure the man whom she hopes may yet make her a Countess! She may have loved you well enough last summer, but by this time the fires of ambition have been kindled in her soul. The discovery of your rank has given her new hopes and new purposes; all you have to do to insure tranquillity on her part is to promise her future recognition, and feign repentance for your late conduct. You will thus reawaken her old love for you and show her that it is for her interest to consider your wishes."

"But how shall I keep up that course of conduct?"

"That will be easy enough. Tell her you are trying to combat the prejudices of your relatives, who would be horrified at receiving your plebeian bride. Send her away from here to some country place, to remain while you are working here in her behalf. Write to her often, and keep her unsuspecting until you send her the announcement of your marriage to Lady Leopolde. Then remonstrance will be unavailing, and she will succumb to fate and leave you in peace."

The Earl quickened his steps across the gallery in his pleased excitement, hurrying along his friend, who would have preferred to move more slowly, and said,—

"Why did I not think of that plan before? I might have put it into execution last night. It is the best, the safest, the only course for me to adopt. I believe I see my way out of my troubles, Werner—thanks to you!"

"Don't walk quite so fast, my dear fellow!" expostulated the Baronet. "I am glad my advice suits you, and hope you will follow it. You had better get rid of the girl this evening. If necessary, you might go with her to see her settled in some quiet spot. I can excuse your temporary absence!"

"I don't care to go. Roke will do just as well. I will give the fellow my instructions, which he will fulfil to the letter. But where can I send her, Werner? Not to one of my estates, for such an act would render me liable to annoyance hereafter!"

After a period of reflection Sir Wilton responded,—

"I have it, Templecombe! I own a small and barren place about fifty miles from here, as you know, called the Fens. But, as you do not know, it is at present unlet. Although out of repair, it is partly furnished. There are no immediate neighbours, so you need have no fear that the girl would find sympathisers there. Take her to the Fens, by all means. The place can pass with her as your own!"

The Earl assented, and Sir Wilton continued,—

"The spot is gloomy enough, as you may suspect from the name. A residence there may subdue the girl's spirit!"

"The gloomier the better! Roke shall start with her as soon as I can arrange it—perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow. I shall not lack opportunities of urging the scheme upon Natalie, as she has promised to be ever at my heels. She will consent to go, and remain at the Fens until I am safely married to her loftier rival, I am positive!"

The Earl continued to express his joy and relief at the prospects before him, until Sir Wilton drew him to the window looking down upon the lawn, and directed his gaze to the gay groups wandering about under the shadowing trees or clustering around the rustic seats.

"Well?" he then said, inquiringly.

"Notice, my dear Templecombe, the couple under that sycamore to the right."

"Lady Leopolde and Basil Montmaur. They are conversing together. I see nothing worthy of remark!"

"Nothing in their manner, nor in the way in which he looks into her ladyship's face?"

"Since you suggest it, it seems to me as if he has a sort of protecting air towards her. She certainly regards him with a charming shyness which looks like affection. But then they are relatives."

"You are a nearer relative to Lady Leopolde, but she never exhibits towards you that pretty embarrassment. Do not deceive yourself Templecombe. They are engaged to each other. There can be no doubt about it, for last evening, when I came upon them in the balcony, their hands were clasped, and I saw in a moment the state of affairs between them!"

His lordship uttered an exclamation more forcible than polite, adding,—

"I feared an engagement between them, but I hoped otherwise. It is certainly very annoying, to say the least!"

"Then you relinquish your pretensions to the hand of Lady Leopolde?"

"By no means. We shall see what time and persistency will accomplish with my lady cousin. Engaged lovers do not always wed," and he smiled darkly. "Estrangements often occur between devoted hearts, and ladies have been known to marry men whom they have once scornfully refused!"

The Baronet understood his friend as making a declaration on his own account, and smiled appreciatively, as he answered,—

"You are right, Templecombe. We will accept your words as prophecy! Rid yourself of this country girl, so that she may not clog your path, and then address yourself to the task to which you just alluded. You may count upon my assistance."

"Thanks! I have also the consent of Miss Alethea, whose influence with her niece I know to be great. The advantage is all on my side,

and Basil is sure to be worsted in the game before us. He might have known better than to interfere with my schemes. It will go hard with me if I cannot find some weak point in his armour, by which to render him distasteful to Lady Leopolde. By the way, Werner, have you declared yourself yet to Miss Alethea?"

"No. I am more cautious than you, and take time to make a favourable impression. Miss Wycherly is a bewildering mystery, and I am studying her. Sometimes I think she would say 'yes' if I were to propose the momentous question, and again I am equally sure that she is engaged to that Layne. I cannot see," he added, petulantly, "what she can see in him to admire. I detest those smiling, good-natured fellows who are always such favourites with the ladies!"

"Then the Marquis suits you?"

"No. I don't like Lord Waldemere. He carries with him an atmosphere of gloom, like a gathering tempest, that is extremely disagreeable to an easy-going, pleasure-loving fellow like me! Miss Wycherly does not like him. It is easy to see that she detests him, while he acts like a jealous and disappointed lover. I presume that she rejected him once, and he has brooded over the refusal ever since!"

"But that rejection cannot have been the cause of his asceticism!"

"Certainly not. The man isn't a lunatic that he should shut himself up in a hermitage because a woman refused to marry him. But the fact, no doubt, gave an added pang to the misery he evidently has endured, and still endures. I think his lordship has some hold upon Miss Wycherly. What it can be is a task I have set myself to learn. When I have discovered it, it cannot possibly effect my sentiments towards her!"

The friends, absorbed in their different schemes, lapsed into a silence, which was broken at length by the Baronet, who exclaimed,—

"There comes Layne up the avenue at this moment! And yonder saunters the Marquis, with a carelessness and airlessness which would deceive anybody but me. He is approaching the Castle. Let us go down, my lord. I would like to witness the reception of Layne by Miss Wycherly. She shall behold her trio of lovers together!"

With a light laugh that concealed his real feelings, Sir Wilton linked his arm again into the Earl's, and the two friends took their way to the drawing-room together, Lord Templecombe, proceeding thence, with a smiling face, to the lawn.

CHAPTER XX.

It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.

—Scott.

Slowly folding, how she linger'd,
O'er the word his hands had traced,
Though the plashing drops had fallen,
And the faint lines half effaced.

—Mrs J. C. Neal.

LORD TEMPLECOMBE would have been startled could he but have known the purport of the interview he had witnessed under the spreading sycamore between Lady Leopolde and Basil Montmaur.

Since he had discovered that the Earl's midnight visitor was not Lady Leopolde, but a mysterious counterpart of her ladyship, Basil had been perplexed and bewildered, but no longer troubled. To feel that no image obscured his own in the heart of his betrothed was a joy so overpowering that all other feelings lessened their proportions, and he wondered how he could for one moment have doubted her fidelity or love.

As he stood in the shade on the lawn, a little retired from the neighbouring groups, he poured forth the whole story of his doubts

and fears to the listening Lady Leopolde, and related to her his discovery of the previous night.

Contrary to his apprehensions, his betrothed was not angered by the narration, but smiled as she responded,—

"Ah, Basil, did you suppose that your doubts and your jealousies were unknown to me? They were natural, and I would not, if I could, blame you for them. Yet you might have known me better!"

"I know it, darling," said Basil, penitently. "Another time I will disregard the evidence of every sense I possess before I will believe anything to your discredit. Can you ever forgive me?"

Lady Leopolde answered by a loving smile that was sufficient assurance that she would not be implacable, and remarked,—

"You must have had a very humble opinion of yourself, Basil, when you thought it possible that once having known you, I could prefer Vane," and she blushed confusedly at her confession.

Basil was delighted at this remark, and expressed his joy in lover-like language.

Under cover of an apparently trifling demeanour, the lovers conversed some time with tender earnestness, and at length, Basil said, half playfully, half seriously,—

"You have not yet explained the mystery of this counterpart of yours, dearest Leopolde. Have you a phantom double, as the school-mistress had in the quaint old German legend?"

"I was inclined to think so myself lately, Basil," answered the maiden, with a smile. "I don't wonder, therefore at your question."

"Which remains unanswered, darling?"

"And which must so remain for the present, dear Basil. To explain to you the mystery which has so troubled you would be to reveal a secret which belongs more to another than myself. In good time you shall know all!"

Basil expressed himself contented with this promise, adding,—

"But may I not know who this young girl is who looks so strangely like you?"

"She herself scarcely knows, Basil. There is a link missing in her genealogy, and she cannot tell her rightful name. A strange fate has linked her destiny with Vane's, to whose name and protection she has a legal right, as I believe. There! I have told you more than I intended and shall run away from you lest you make me a thorough traitor!"

"The secret is safe with me, my darling. You have made me very happy this morning, and my future devotion shall repay you."

At this juncture, Lord Waldemere sauntered carelessly into the view of the young couple, and they had scarcely observed him, when Richard Layne dashed up the avenue, passing them, on his way to the Castle.

The Marquis paused a moment or two to converse with the maiden and her lover, and his manner had never been more pleasant or careless. But Basil marked that his eyes had a restless glitter, and that his breathing was quick and heavy, as if some emotion were struggling in his heart.

He soon passed on, and Montmaur conducted his betrothed to the nearest group, as he observed the approach of Lord Templecombe, and rightly conjectured the intended destination of his lordship.

The morning wore on pleasantly, Leopolde being the life of the company, but when the hour for riding approached she excused herself from joining her friends, and retired to her own rooms, with a purpose the execution of which we are about to record.

Since learning the story of poor Natalie, the name of Amy Afton had rung in the ears of Lady Leopolde until she had become convinced that she had heard or seen it before. Memory, however, for some time refused to recall when or where she had encountered it, and she had begun to regard her conviction as a freak of the imagination, when the truth flashed into her mind, and the full particulars of the in-

cident established themselves in her remembrance.

To examine farther and fully into the matter had become her instant resolve.

Her rooms were upon the second floor of the Castle, the ground floor containing the grand drawing-room, and were situated, as has been said, in the western tower, and directly beneath the chambers allotted to Lord Templecombe.

They were precisely similar in number and size to those of Miss Wycherly's, and were similarly arranged, excepting that there was no private staircase to the ground-floor, and no secret ascent to the upper chambers; but the furniture was more in accordance with the tastes of a young maiden.

Delicate colours and workmanship were the distinguishing features; the carving was the work of a genuine artist; the curtains were of rich and costly lace, half-concealed by silken drapery; the pictures were all small, but gems in conception and execution; and the entire effect, while rich, was very pure and chaste.

It was certainly a fitting bower for Lady Leopolde.

Its lovely owner stationed herself behind her carefully arranged *jalousies*, and looked out upon the lawn until the riders took their way down the avenue, and her violet eyes glowed with gentle steadiness as they followed the movements of her handsome lover.

"Surely there was never another man like my Basil," she murmured, proudly. "He sits his horse like a paladin! Why, there is Aunt Alethea!" she added, in a louder tone, indicative of surprise. "She looks like a queen. I think nature must have intended her to occupy a throne, when she endowed her with that magnificent beauty and that air of haughtiness. At any rate, she is a queen now, for she has two most faithful vassals, one on either side."

Her voice broke in a rippling laugh as she concluded, and she watched, with merry eyes, Miss Alethea as she rode her stately stepping steed, escorted on either side by Lord Waldemere and Sir Wilton Werner.

Richard Layne followed, in close attendance upon Lady Ellen Haigh, and the remainder of the party rode in one large but scattered group.

Leopolde looked after them all, with many pleasant speculation of what the future might bring, until they had passed beyond the great gates and turned down the road leading to the village.

She then arose, went into the adjoining chamber, and opened her jewel-casket—a large, square, ebony box, inlaid with white ivory—taking thence a small bunch of keys, to the ring of which was attached a tiny label bearing an inscription.

From another box she produced a small key, of larger size, and with these in her hands she quitted her apartments, going into the corridor, and up one staircase and then another until she had gained the topmost storey.

She then proceeded to the upper floor of the tower—a storey higher than the central edifice—unlocked the door with the detached key in her possession, and entered an ante-chamber, securing the door behind her, that her proposed investigation might not be interrupted.

The suite of rooms to which she had gained admittance, though sufficiently luxurious, differed greatly from the apartments already described.

The floor was of polished oak, laid in an intricate and very effective pattern, and looked like ebony, the years have darkened and hardened the wood.

The walls were hung with tapestry, torn and moth-eaten in many places, yet retaining something of its original beauty.

An entire and well-executed picture of Moses in the bulrushes, with a dark-eyed Egyptian maiden, Pharaoh's daughter, bending over him, still remained to attest to the

skill and industry of the noble dames whose work had survived them many centuries.

There was a small and choice selection of books in a massive case, which was supported by elaborately carved claws of ponderous size.

There was an equally massive book case and writing-desk combined, and heavy tables, which supported only a collection of Eastern pipes, whose elaborate workmanship and ornamentation would have rendered them of priceless value to a well-instructed Oriental.

There were cabinets of minerals, &c., a well-arranged botanical collection, and a telescope, of moderate power, which had long since been taken from its mountings.

These things, with many others, were scattered through the rooms, and all showed a careful preservation from dust and the ravages of time.

These rooms had been the favourite haunt of the late Earl of Templecombe, and after his death no one had ever dared to disturb them.

The keys had been early given to his daughter, and after her return to the Castle, Lady Leopolde had taken pleasure in paying frequent visits to the deserted chambers, and studying in their contents something of the father of whom she scarcely retained a personal remembrance.

He had chosen these particular rooms partly on account of their seclusion, partly on account of the beautiful view they commanded, and partly because they were favourably situated for the pursuit of astronomical studies.

He had studied the stars, smoked his pipes, read his books, fingered his musical instruments, and looked out upon the broad demesne belonging to the Castle.

(To be continued.)

A GIRL'S HEART.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE life of John Trevelyan trembled in the balance for many days. They were terrible, awful days for the poor, wan-faced, little wife, who sat motionless beside the bedside, seeing nothing, conscious of nothing but that strange, almost grotesquely, rigid figure, which they told her was her beloved, magnificent Jack.

The fall had injured the spine, and a species of paralysis, beginning with the body and spreading upwards, was the result.

The great London physicians were very grave over their patient, and shook their heads to Lord Taunton.

"He may live!" they said, "but——"

It was an ominous word that "but," and Hugo felt a cold shudder pass through him as he listened. At first, against all his desires, hope would not come; but as day passed day, somehow, Hugo permitted himself to encourage the thought that the doctors, specialists and world-famed as they were, might after all be wrong, and that life was not at an end for splendid, honest-hearted, gentle-natured Jack Trevelyan.

He said nothing of this hope to anyone, least of all to his sister. It would only be a new torture to her to grasp on this hope, and then to realise that it was a myth. Not that Lady Gus understood, for one single instant, the full danger that threatened her heart's beloved. She was not sanguine, nor did her face light with any assurance that some good would come. No. She sat there a strange, distorted likeness to her former laughing, sunny self; and from her drawn, haggard, thin face, one would have gathered that the worst had come to her, and that the truth was known in all its awful bleakness.

Hugo knew better—not only because his sister's nature was something he had studied from earliest childhood, but because humanity

was a subject he had gauged just as keenly, and he understood how much human nature clings to the last remnant of hope, be it ever so small, and ever so unconscious.

Blanche Glenlee was still at the Abbey, and very dreary she found it. She hated the sensation of sickness in the house, being always of an extraordinarily healthy temperament. Suffering and illness was something Blanche could never understand.

She would have gladly gone away, and have joined her mother in town, but for a dogged determination to carry out the project for which she came to Torre, and for which she had sacrificed the season and all its allurements.

Her mother, Lady Rose, approved most highly of this prolonged visit, as indeed she approved of anything that gave her daughter any pleasure.

The mother had something more than a hard task to please Blanche, and the thought of a probable marriage with such a man as Hugo was something that gave her the keenest satisfaction.

She had known Lord Taunton since his childhood, and was very fond of him. Blanche never permitted her mother to share in her life, but in this case she had broken through her rule so far as to let Lady Rose guess at what she most desired.

She had very little real encouragement to give her hopes. True, she saw Hugo at every meal, and received from him the same gentle, courtly attention as heretofore; but beyond this she had very little of Lord Taunton's society. She did not quite know how she managed to live through the dreary succession of days that followed one another in slow, monotonous fashion.

She read a little, and wrote long letters to her female acquaintances, and she went out for an occasional stroll or drive through the grounds.

The weather had grown daily more delicious, and May became June, while poor John Trevelyan still lay a silent, motionless figure, dead to all appearances, save for the light that shone in his eloquent, grey eyes, and spoke of the soul that breathed and lived within his breast.

Blanche had set up a habit of having a chair carried to the wide hall entrance, and there, garmented in some delicate hued robe, rich in lace, or almost severe in dainty severity, she would sit back in hand, gazing over the grounds with an air as though there was no subject so exquisite or sweet to her as the study of nature. From this point of vantage she could not fail to catch Hugo, as he came and went, either passing from his study or ascending or descending the stairs to and from the sick room.

He would sometimes come and spend five minutes beside her chair; but there were other times, and these were the most frequent, when he was so deeply lost in his sad train of thought, as to be absolutely unconscious of the beautiful woman sitting just close to his reach.

He had been greatly touched by Blanche's apparent loyalty to her friendship.

He had, of course, as soon as he had arrived at the Abbey, hastened to assist Miss Glenlee to take her departure as quickly as she desired, and had been vaguely surprised and pleased at Blanche's earnest entreaty to be allowed to remain.

"Oh! I could not leave Gus now—now above all times!" she said to him, and there was something like a tear in the cold, blue eye as she spoke.

The catastrophe had been so sudden and so awful; and Miss Glenlee being nervously antagonistic to all horrors, her calmness had been quite upset for the moment, and her selfish fears for her own individual safety from sharing in any of the unpleasant duties attendant on such an accident as had befallen Lady Gus's husband produced an agitation which thoroughly deceived Hugo, and was the means of inspiring him involuntarily with a

feeling of much warmer appreciation than he had ever imagined it possible he could have experienced for Miss Glenlee.

He made an effort to dissuade her from her purpose; speaking gently of the shadow that had fallen on the house, and which would make her life gloomy and unhappy if she remained at Torre.

But Blanche would not be dissuaded.

"Please let me stay?" she said. "I will give no trouble. I feel I am at home here, and I might be able to help poor little Gus. I really could not go now—not, at all events, until we know—"

She had not finished the sentence, but Hugo had known what the end was, and again he was touched by what he imagined was a display of her real nature.

"How easily one learns to misjudge people," he had thought to himself, as he had left her after this. "I never gave that girl the least credit for possessing the smallest touch of either heart or humanity, and she is evidently rich in both. She has been taught to hide her emotions, and it is only in times like this that one would ever really know her. I begin to understand Gus's affection for her now. It was a mystery before!"

And then Hugo had dismissed all thought of Blanche; and save for an occasional sense of pleasure, in hearing her utter some soft word of regret, or make some gentle offer of assistance, he almost grew to forget her presence altogether.

Blanche certainly possessed one good quality. She was never inharmonious, save, perhaps, when her not particularly sharp intelligence failed to keep pace with others more keenly strung.

She was so quiet, so largely graceful, so gentle spoken, that she always drifted into forming, as it were, a portion of the picture in which she had a place.

Hugo had grown to accept her presence quite naturally. She might not be of any tangible good, but she was distinctly not objectionable in any sense whatever. Indeed, he would not have been greatly surprised if anyone would have told him how much he would have missed the presence of this quiet, handsome young woman who sat opposite to him at every meal, and seemed to do this as one who was absolutely and comfortably at home.

Blanche's mind was occupied generally during these silent meals by sketching out future alterations in the various apartments of the Abbey when she should have acquired the right to make these same alterations. Somehow she grew more and more sanguine as the days passed, and yet Hugo's manner never changed; and had Blanche been a more skilled reader of human countenance she would have quickly discovered that there was more than one cause for Lord Taunton's grave, quiet exterior, and heavy air of preoccupation. She would also have quickly arrived at one conclusion concerning the Earl, and this conclusion would have been the fact that he was a man who was exerting some tremendous power of self-repression, that all was far from being quiet and subdued as she imagined, but that beneath his keen, quiet manner there lurked a very fire of emotion, an excitement, an agony of mental pain, a very flood of passion and despair.

Fortunately for her own peace of mind Miss Glenlee guessed nothing of this, and having no cue to imagine differently, was unconcernedly determined that Lord Taunton was akin to herself—a man ignorant of anything amounting to emotion or agitation.

His coldness of bearing, almost his indifference, misled Miss Glenlee here as it would have misled any creature in whom sympathy was not strongly developed. How was she to guess at what lay beneath?

And so the days sped by, and June brought a feast of roses about the old time-worn Abbey. The news from the sick room was always the same. Blanche went through the usual

formula every morning of standing at the door of the darkened chamber, and whispering a salutation to the thin, haggard, almost old, little woman who came towards her.

There never was anything she could do for Lady Gus, and Blanche always gave a sigh of relief, when she turned away, and went down to sit in her accustomed place.

The poor, distraught, little wife was full of gratitude to her friend, for the earnest affection and interest her manner expressed, and said so at odd times to Hugo, who always agreed, with some kind word for the guest who was so sympathetic in her silence, and unobtrusive in her presence. There came a change in the monotony at last.

One afternoon, as Miss Glenlee stood at the open doorway, gazing out somewhat drearily over the gardens, she heard a quick, light step behind her. There was a sort of smothered cry, and then a little figure was clinging to Miss Glenlee's magnificent form.

"Oh, Blanche! Blanche! He has spoken. He knows me. He called me by my name. He will live. Oh, Heaven, let him live. It is all I ask. I will—will—"

The voice died away in a choked sort of way. The little figure lay heavily against Blanche. She looked across the hall to where Hugo came hurrying.

"She has fainted!" she said, and he took the unconscious form in his arms, and laid it back in the chair.

Even Blanche's selfish nature was shocked as she looked at the woful change. These terrible weeks of watching and dreading had worked in Augusta Trevelyan's brilliant youth and piquante prettiness. The small face looked pinched and pale, as with the pallor of death.

Hugo's lips moved involuntarily as he bent over his sister. His hands ministered to her tenderly. He would let no one touch her but himself; and as Blanche stood by, silently watching him, there came once again into her heart a flame of something more than ambitious desire and vanity—a something that was as near akin to passion and love as Blanche Glenlee would ever know or feel. It was not so much his name or his position or his possessions that became desirable to her in this moment, it was the man himself she felt she most cared about; and there was almost an incipient sensation of jealousy that any woman save herself, not even his sister, should receive such delicate, tender care as she now saw him lavishing on poor little Lady Gus.

"I will win him!" Blanche said to herself slowly in this moment, the truth forcing itself, as it were, upon her. "I will win him! I will be his wife! I must be his wife! I cannot live without him!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

FROM that day there began a marked and an almost extraordinary change for the better in Jack Trevelyan's condition. The doctors were forced to confess themselves for once worsted by nature, who had asserted herself in the most pronounced and unexpected way.

They fell back, of course, on the old formula of "phenomenal constitution, unusual vitality," and the rest of the stock phrases that come so easily under such conditions.

Lady Gus did not trouble herself in the least as to what they might or might not say now. Her Jack was restored to her—a poor, weak, fragile Jack, it was true; but still, Jack. And his own assurances of comfort, his own belief in his recovery, was more to her than the whole army of physicians from the four corners of the universe.

"We shall have him downstairs in a week, Hugo!" she cried, a fortnight later than the events of the preceding chapter. "He shall just lie here and see the trees and grass, and smell the flowers, and feel the sunshine, and he will get better every hour!"

Lady Gus was almost herself again. The colour had flickered back to her cheeks, her

lips, and her eyes. She could smile now, and even began a new guerilla warfare with Brown, and had already had a few romps with her babies just as of yore.

She was so happy, so grateful, so full of content. She did not dare let herself look back on those awful, dark, dreary days just gone. She wanted to remember nothing but the great golden future which stretched before her once more, and held such visions of happiness now her Jack was becoming the shadow of his former self.

Blanche Glenie was sincerely glad for her little friend, and Gus was never tired of dwelling on the unselfish sympathy that had prompted this handsome young woman to turn her back on the gaieties of town to participate in the shadow and sorrow at Torre.

"It has drawn Blanche closer to me than before," she confided to her husband, as she nestled on his bed and fanned him unceasingly.

"She is very kind," Jack Trevelyan said, in his weak voice, that was slow and sometimes hesitating. "I am glad she has proved herself worthy of your friendship, little one."

Lady Gus stroked the big hand that lay so white and feeble on the coverlet.

"Yes," she said, with a grave and rather a pained manner. "Yes, it is pleasant to feel one has not been mistaken either in one's friends or one's acquaintances."

She fanned on for a moment, and her husband waited, knowing she would explain the meaning of this speech in due time.

She did so almost immediately.

"I have got a confession to make to you, Jack," she said, after a little pause, her small fingers caressing his hand tenderly.

"Something very awful, my bird?" she tone almost what it used to be.

Lady Gus looked into her husband's face.

"Jack," she said, "you were right, after all, about Mr. Hunter."

Jack Trevelyan uttered a sort of suppressed exclamation.

"What has happened?"

"I have been so distressed and disappointed, Jack, and—almost ashamed, too, because, you see, I did make a fuss about him; and then naturally the other people here thought he was all—"

Lady Gus came to a full stop.

"And, Jack," she said, hurriedly, "I cannot tell you how sorry I am for that pretty young wife. Her face, her eyes have haunted me ever since the night of the concert. I am afraid she will have a dreadful life!"

"What has happened?" Mr. Trevelyan asked again.

Lady Gus put down her fan.

"Jack, he is not an honourable man, I am afraid! I don't like saying it, but I am afraid he is scoundrelly honest. The Rector came to see me this morning. Of course, I have been too far lost in my trouble to know anything of what has been going on in Torre, or indeed, anywhere except in this bedroom, so I was very much astonished to hear from the Rector that Mr. Hunter has never returned to his post. He wrote weeks ago throwing up the situation, and announcing his intention to live in London, where he had a more lucrative employment offered him. Of course, that was all right; there was no reason why he should not do this, but—"

"But," Mr. Trevelyan repeated.

"But there was every reason why he should have paid his debts before he went; and he certainly ought not to have borrowed money from a poor man, unless he knew he had the means to repay it!"

"Ah!" said Jack Trevelyan, quietly. "I was afraid he was a wrong 'un. He had the look of it in his eyes!"

"I thought him a saint—too beautiful to be human!" Lady Gus cried, going on with her fanning, and putting a strawberry between her pretty, red lips.

"And in this all, Gus?"

"I am hurt at his utter neglect of me!" Lady Gus confessed. "Just fancy, he has

never written me one word of regret or sympathy throughout your illness. It seems almost extraordinary when one remembers his enthusiasm about me, and everything belonging to me!"

"My vain little bird!"

"Oh! it is not vanity, Jack. I assure you I am almost grieved; and then to feel that I practically opened the doors of all the best houses in the neighbourhood to him, and that he has so disgraced himself. The Rector tells me he has borrowed money from nearly everybody who had any to lend. Of course, with me it was diff—"

"Oh! so he came to you, did he?" Jack said, his eyes having a touch of his old, mischievous twinkle in them. "And how much were you good for, Gus, eh?"

Lady Gus sat another strawberry defiantly. "I bought a miniature from him. He said it was a family portrait, grandfather, I think, done by some celebrated artist, and was worth over a hundred pounds. So—"

"So," the eyes twinkling a little more.

"So—don't dare to laugh, Jack. Remember you are in my power now. So I thought it was a bargain, and I gave him—"

"What he asked, eh?"

Lady Gus nodded her head.

Mr. Trevelyan looked preternaturally grave.

"I should like to see your bargain, little one!"

"I'll go and get it!"

Lady Gus slipped down from the bed, and ran out of the room, and her husband lay back thinking, his brows contracted into a frown.

"Does Hugo know they are gone? Poor lad, it meant something bad to him, I fear. I wonder what the truth was, and if it will be a lasting pain? I almost fear it. That girl too. I am sorry for her. There is something I don't understand in all this—some mystery. Hunter himself is the only clear point, and there is nothing mysterious in a very commonplace, everyday accident. Shouldn't be surprised if he had not managed to secrete a few of the spoons about his person each time he dined here?"

Lady Gus flew back at this moment.

"It looks good, Jack!" she said, half-apologetically, as she presented herself on the bed. "The work is very fine, and the frame is distinctly good. This looks like gold, doesn't it?"

Mr. Trevelyan took the miniature in his weak hands, and examined it closely. An expression of indecision, ending in surprise, came over his face.

"This is indeed odd!" he said, half to himself.

Lady Gus leaned forward in great excitement.

"Is it really good after all, Jack?" she asked.

Mr. Trevelyan paused before answering, and when he did speak he said something quite different to what his wife expected.

"Is Hugo in? Go and fetch him, darling; I should like him to come!"

Lady Gus obeyed without a word, and in a few minutes returned, with Hugo following her.

Mr. Trevelyan handed the miniature to his brother-in-law.

"Do you recognise that?" he asked.

Hugo looked at it, and shook his head. "I don't mean the picture—I mean the frame. Look at it well!"

Lord Taunton scrutinised the goldwork of the setting, and then he turned to Mr. Trevelyan's questioning eyes. Lady Gus was waiting, perched up in one of her favourite heap-like attitudes, her face full of curiosity.

"I see nothing peculiar about the frame, Jack!" the Earl said, slightly puzzled. "It is a very ordinary pattern, just the same as the rest of the Taunton collection of miniatures. What did you mean, old fellow?"

"You have answered exactly as I expected," was Mr. Trevelyan's somewhat enigmatical reply. "That is one of the

Taunton miniatures, Hugo, and—little one, just explain how that came into your possession?"

"Stole it from the collection, eh, Gus?" Hugo said, with a faint smile.

Lady Gus looked at her husband, and shook her head defiantly at him.

"I bought the miniature from Blair Hunter for one hundred guineas," she said, coolly, and then she gave the rest of the story. Hugo listened with contracted brows, and lips firmly set. He made no comment at first, and Jack Trevelyan, having a slight clue to the secret in his breast, knew that the fact of Blair Hunter's true character being proclaimed was something that hurt his reserved, proud, brother-in-law through the most vulnerable part of his nature.

Lord Taunton looked from the miniature to the honest eyes lying on the pillow.

"What do you think, Jack?"

Mr. Trevelyan laughed.

"That Mr. Hunter is about as clever and bold-faced a thief as one could care to meet. He has the audacity to steal one of the heirlooms of the house, and then to sell it again to one of its proper owners at a magnificent profit to himself. By Jove, he is no fool!"

Lady Gus was agast.

"Oh, Jack, darling. You don't surely think such a thing!"

"There is no other explanation that I can see. How otherwise does this man account for having in his possession a miniature of one of your ancestors set in a frame that bears—infinite! I grant, but there, nevertheless—the armorial bearings of your house?"

Lord Taunton still stood looking down at the exquisite picture in his hand.

"Where is the collection?" he asked, abruptly. "Was it not moved to London from Malworth?" Malworth was the estate in Scotland, a large, somewhat bleak property which the present Earl had never inhabited.

Lady Gus nodded her head.

"Of course, don't you remember?" she answered, "the miniatures as well as the armour and some of the pictures were all brought up Malworth four years ago when you lent them to the—Exhibition. They must be in Eaton Square. It is a very disgraceful thing of me not to have seen after them better, but—"

Lady Gus did not finish.

"But," she might have said, "in those days it was not my province to interfere, and as your wife always refused to live in your proper town house, declaring it gave her the 'blues,' and insisted on your establishing her in some more brilliant mansion—things that should have been carefully looked after drifted naturally into the care of servants, and so became forgotten."

Lord Taunton understood his sister's silence, and Mr. Trevelyan spoke next.

"Laxon can tell us all about everything. I believe he could recount for the whole of the Taunton genealogical tree at full length, and give us the biography of every member of the family—man, woman, or child. Ten to one he will be able to tell you who this individual in this miniature is, and probably will be able to describe the very spot in the cabinet from which it has been stolen."

"Unless," Hugo said, looking up, with a grim smile, "unless the cabinet itself is gone too!"

Mr. Trevelyan uttered an almost energetic "By Jove," and Lady Gus went to summon Laxon, who held the post of major domo in the establishment, having lived in the service of the family all his life, his father being butler before him.

He was a clean-shaven, almost a superior-looking man, with double eyeglasses, through which he carefully scrutinised the miniature held out to him.

"His lordship Sholto Danmore, seventeenth Earl of Taunton and Torre, and your lordship's grandfather," was his immediate remark, and then the grave, respectful face looked up. "May I be so bold as to ask you,



[THERE WAS A SMOTHERED CRY, AND THEN A LITTLE FIGURE WAS CLINGING TO MISS GLENLEE'S MAGNIFICENT FORM!]

my lord, where this was found? It has always been a mystery to me as to how and why it had disappeared from the collection."

Lord Taunton's handsome eyes looked keenly into those of his old and faithful servant.

"How long have you noticed this missing?" he asked.

Laxon was quick in answering.

"I never remember its being there at all, my lord. Certainly it has never been there during my time."

The other three were silent.

"And yet," Hugo said, breaking this silence, "and yet you recognised it, Laxon?"

"Yes, my lord, because I knew of it by description from my father, and because also it could be the only one in your possession—at least, according to the records of the house, because—"

"Because?" Lady Gus broke in impatiently.

"Because, my lady, the rest of the miniatures are in my possession, and no one could possibly reach them except through me."

A little further discussion explained that all the valuables that had been brought from Malworth for the loan to the exhibition had, on Laxon's authority, been stored in two apartments in the large town house, the doors of which had been securely sealed under his supervision.

The question of theft, therefore, in connection with the miniature was impossible, for Laxon had travelled to London only a few weeks before, and had seen that all was exactly as it had been for the past four years. Moreover, his testimony as to this particular picture having been missing for so long set on one side all possibility of Hunter's having possessed himself of it in this way.

The question was, then, how had he obtained possession of it?

Jack Trevelyan summed up the matter in a very few words.

"Bought it for an old song, probably from

a second-hand dealer, who got told of it in some way—not direct, of course, from the original thief!"

Lady Gus nodded approval at her husband, and continued fanning him.

Laxon had gone away quietly, and after a moment or two Lord Taunton followed suit. He was quick to see that the invalid was fatigued with the small excitement, and he wanted to be alone to think.

Of late he had not allowed his thoughts to obtrude themselves; but now, as by a touch of fire, this mention of Hunter's name swept away the restraint he had put on himself, and his heart, his brain, his living consciousness was full of one feeling; only, as he went forth into the summer sunshine, the remembrance of his shattered love-dream, of the desolation, of his hope, of the existence of some horrible, intangible, indefinite fear that hung about the form of Alwynne, and would not be exorcised.

The selfishness of love was not so paramount in his mind at this moment as the tenderness. He yearned over the girl, he longed to stretch out his strong, right hand and draw her into his protecting care—to know that he might never do this was simple torture—a pain as bitter as death!

Lady Gus sat very silent for awhile, and her husband lay watching her. By-and-by he spoke,—

"You have got something in your little mind, out with it!" he said, in a manner that was a faint likeness of his old merry self. "Hope you didn't fall in love with Hunter, my bird!"

Lady Gus got furious.

"If you weren't so weak I would shake you for an hour! How dare you say such a thing!"

She bent forward and kissed the thin hand as she spoke.

"I was thinking about that girl, Jack. Do you know, I have felt so sure lately that something was wrong about that marriage! I

wish I could have been able to help her a little. She had such a sad, desolate look in her beautiful eyes; and now I know. Jack, supposing he should not be good to her! Oh! I do feel sorry for her! The worst is now I feel she is gone out of my life altogether, and perhaps I may never see her again!"

"One never knows. Life's a strange river; all sorts of crafts meet on its broad, deep bosom. Poor child! I fear she needs a friend!"

Jack Trevelyan sighed a little as he lay back, clasping his wife's hand. The thought of Alwynne was coupled to him now with Hugo.

He knew nothing, but he possessed illimitable sympathy, and he needed no words to tell him that this girl's sorrow would be something more bitter and terrible to his wife's brother than anything that had gone before.

(To be continued.)

THE French foot, according to a very probable tradition, was derived from the length of Charlemagne's, while our own measure of twelve inches is supposed to have been the length of a stalwart Saxon's foot.

At first every man was his own shoemaker. In the early attempts at shoemaking the aim sought was not a covering for the foot, but a protection to the soles from sticks, stones, &c. The Egyptians made theirs of the bark of the papyrus, a rush growing on the banks of the Nile. Of course, it did not take long to find out that the sandals might be improved by stitching a low rim or wall of leathering along the sides and about the heels of sandals; to these the straps or thongs were attached. By slow degrees—for invention creeps with leaden feet—these rims grew higher; at last they met, and, behold, there was the first shoe, crude and ungainly, but nevertheless a shoe.



[HONORA FELL UPON HER KNEES AND HID HER FACE IN THE CUSHIONS OF HER CHAIR, SHUDDERING WITH THE FIERCE EMOTION POSSESSING HER.]

NOVELLITE.]

OUT OF THE GLOOM.

CHAPTER I.

"WHEN I married you, madam, you had not a cent to call your own!"

"And that was the reason I married you," answered Lady Honora, with perfect coolness, which only aggravated Mr. Simon Haredale the more.

"Upon my word, you are calm," he said, rather loudly. "You might at least have the decency to keep that reason to yourself."

"In other words, to 'assume a virtue if I have it not.' Mr. Haredale, you should know by experience that candour is part and parcel of my nature."

"As is extravagance," he retorted, angrily. "You spend my money like water."

The bright, dark grey eyes smile into the gloomy ones above.

"What is money for if not to spend? And there never was yet a Ballyhoran who did not know how to do that. The worst of it was we so rarely had the chance of exercising our talent."

"You have exercised yours well since you became my wife; and I tell you, there must be some limit to your extravagance, or you will ruin me. Look at this bill of Mantons', for instance," and the irate husband thrust it before her eyes.

"It is rather excessive," her ladyship said, calmly; "but you must recollect, Mr. Haredale, I did not fix the prices. Remonstrate with Mantons, not with me!"

"You already have more gowns than you can wear. Why on earth did you order others? When you were plain Honora MacDennis of Ballyhoran you had not a decent frock to your back!"

"I never was plain," saucily; "and although what you say is quite true, I cannot compli-

ment you on the good taste of your remark. I was as poor as poor could be—horribly, shamefully poor—and you knew it. There is no occasion to twit me with my poverty."

"I did not intend to do so, but you force me to speak plainly. I am sure the allowance I make you should be sufficient for any woman who was not criminally extravagant."

The lady's eyes flashed with sudden passion.

"Why should I consider your purse?" she asked, quickly. "Ought I not to enjoy the price of my freedom? If you had only loved me—just a little—for myself, you would not have found me ungrateful or unreasonable. But you cared no more for me than for any other woman. Only you were rich; you wanted a wife to do you credit—a young wife, nobly born, who would assist you to enter the charmed circle which would not open to you alone for all your gold. And your choice fell upon me—me, a poor, wild Irish girl, scarcely seventeen—without the courage to resist her father's will!"

"Well, we were married—it was only three years ago, but it seems like three centuries to me—and I ask you, from the time we first met, did you ever give me one fond word? I know love between us is impossible. Young hearts will turn to young hearts—and you confess to fifty; but there might have been affection on one side, gratitude and duty on the other. As it is, you have destroyed all chances of such a blessed prospect. The fault is yours. I will not take the blame," and she ended as suddenly as she began, only her eyes were dangerously bright, and the colour in her cheeks was considerably heightened, whilst her bosom rose and fell with her emotion.

"I was not aware," sneered the gentleman, "that you went in for sentiment; and in a purely business transaction like our alliance you could hardly expect it to have a part. You are my wife, and are answerable to me for your actions, are subject to my control. And to save all further dispute let me make it

clear to you that I will not increase your allowance by one farthing, or pay any debt you may contract which is beyond your power to cancel. Do you hear me?"

"You speak with admirable distinctness, sir," Lady Honora answered, with a return of her old *sang froid*, "and fortunately I am not deaf."

"Then please to remember what I have said."

"I shall do my utmost to forget. I hate anything unpleasant."

But Mr. Haredale left the room too soon to hear the reply, which, if the truth must be confessed, was characteristic of his wife; and the lady sighed relievedly.

She sat resting her chin in her hollowed palm, a thoughtful look upon her lovely, piquante face, a shadow of sadness in her dark, beautiful eyes.

She was only twenty, a mere girl yet, and she had been a wife three years. A frown contracted her level brows as she thought,—

"They did not leave me any youth. I was a wife before most girls are out of the school-room. And they think they have done great things for me in accomplishing my marriage. They believe I like this idle, foolish, artificial life. Oh! a thousand times rather would I be running wild about the dear, shabby old place, coarsely fed and badly clothed, than lie as I do in the bed of luxury! If only Mr. Haredale would let me have one of the girls here it would be better—better for me. I grow so hard and wicked, being starved of love. No doubt many envy me. If they only knew the truth! If they only knew the truth!"

Her thoughts strayed fondly to the old ruined castle, with its crumbling walls and broken casements; its wild, neglected grounds beyond which rose the green hills, from which one caught a flash of the unquiet sea, lashing the distant islands, which looked so vague and formless through the soft, hazy air.

Many and many a time the young Ballyhoran trike had wandered at will over the

hills, down to the shore, heedless of the distance; just to watch the vessels as they passed, and speculate on their destination. At such times they would take whatever provisions came first, for they had good healthy appetites; and these impromptu picnics were always enjoyable, even though the party returned at night tired, dirty and dragged.

They were happy young people, even though they had lost their mother; and their father, the poverty-stricken Earl of Ballyhoran, was but an indifferent parent, a riotous, drunken, half-educated man, beside whom Mr. Haredeale showed to greatest advantage. How the Earl and the retired Manchester man chanced to meet Honora never knew; but one day her father bade her make herself presentable, as he should bring a friend home to dinner.

Poor Honora! she had not a gown fit to be seen, but she laughed over this misfortune, being a healthy, happy girl, and met her father's guest without fear or misgiving, not even caring that he regarded her so intently.

"He was such an old man!" she said afterwards to her sister Eily; "one did not care how he looked, or what he said and did."

Simon Haredeale approved the ripe, young beauty. Being fair himself he naturally preferred a dark woman; and Honora, with her dark, grey eyes, her clear, skin, and black hair was extremely lovely, even in her worn frock.

He was an ambitious man, and panted to be a leader in the society which would have none of him. He had made a colossal fortune, and intended to enjoy it after his own fashion. But first he must have a wife, young and high-born, at whose "Sesame" society should fling wide its gate; and she, being young, he might naturally hope for an heir to perpetuate his name and glory. It was one of Simon Haredeale's greatest grievances that Honora had borne him no child.

Well, seeing and approving her, he at once opened his plans to the Earl, who agreed cordially with them, and Honora being summoned was bidden to prepare for marriage. She stood too much in awe of her father to remonstrate, and she was too young to know anything of love or lovers. She only thought in her innocent heart that as Lady Haredeale she could do so much for her tribe of brothers and sisters, all of whom were so dear to her; and so she went unresistingly to the altar, not realising the gravity of the step she was taking, or what misery she might be laying up for herself. She neither liked nor esteemed her husband. Was it possible she should, when he had simply purchased her?—for not one word of love, one thought of love, had entered his matrimonial intentions.

Mr. Haredeale took his youthful bride to England; she cried throughout the journey, and he made no effort to comfort her! He was an essentially cold-hearted man, and Honora's grief at parting with her people was beyond his comprehension. She was going from poverty to wealth—what reason had she for tears?

At first the poor young bride strove to break down her bridegroom's reserve, to minister to his wants; but he repulsed her attentions, and told her folly not to take a servant's office upon herself. She never made a second attempt; but rapidly she changed, with all the quickness of her Irish nature, adapting herself to her altered circumstances, so that, despite her extreme youth, she was soon an authority in her own particular set, which was of the most exclusive nature.

Simon Haredeale was proud of her victories, of the position he (through her) had achieved, and that was all. He could hate well, but of the divine power of love he had no least conception; he liked to see Honora bravely dressed, and surrounded by England's greatest men. He was not jealous that they vied with each other for her favour; he could trust her. Bright and picturesque as she was, she was not a coquette, and love was not for her. She

never thought of it; he knew this, and had no fear that she would sully his name, of which, indeed, he was justly proud.

He had come of humble stock—humble, honest, hardworking people, who did their duty to their neighbour, and served God sincerely according to their light. His own father had started as a factory hand, and through his industry finally became a mill-owner; and on the small foundation laid Simon had built up his great fortune. Certainly in manners and appearance the commoner was the Earl of Ballyhoran's superior, and so much his wife admitted.

"It is such awful nonsense," she said one day to a friend, "to represent the English merchant as ignorant, and careless of the use of the aspirate! No one but a fool would do it! Why, my own father—son of a hundred earls—cannot compare, intellectually or socially, with Mr. Haredeale. I am not a prejudiced party," she concluded, with a scornful glance; "it was quite an open secret that Lady Honora's marriage had been quite *à la mode*."

So she went her way, and he his; conversation between them being rare, save on occasions like the present, when he remonstrated with her on her extravagance, and she openly laughed at him, having grown accustomed to such scenes, and being not a little hardened by the life she led. She was the reigning beauty, certainly—none could deny her charms; and only one man, a great poet, had ever found anything lacking in her loveliness.

"She is very lovely," he said, "but she is not perfect!" and his listener, quite aghast at such heresy, asked,—

"Of what do you complain? She is simply divine!"

"She never will be perfect until she has learned one lesson—the lesson of love. Then, indeed, she would be unsurpassable!"

"But she is a married woman! It is to be hoped she will not learn the lesson."

"Yes, indeed. If ever she loves she will love wholly. I am afraid to think what that might mean for her. She is not to be judged by ordinary standards."

And, quite unconscious of how folks discussed her, Honora held her way, spending lavishly, and indulging in every fashionable whim; but this morning she felt weary and homesick, and a great longing seized her to be at home once more. But it was the height of the London season, and Mr. Haredeale would never allow her to leave for Ireland. Still, there was Eily. It was time she was out, she being now eighteen. Oh, if only she were with her! Then, quick as lightning, she rose and danced her way to Simon's study. He looked up with a frown as she entered, but Honora was not easily daunted.

"I have come to make conditions with you," she said, with an arch glance. "I promise to buy no new gowns, incur no fresh liabilities this season if you will let me have Eily here!"

She looked so lovely, with that entreaty in her eyes, that flush upon her face, one would have thought it impossible for man to deny her anything; but Simon answered, coldly,—

"I cannot consent. That wild Irish girl would disgrace me before my friends by her eccentricities!"

One look she flashed upon him.

"My sister is a lady!" was all she said, but her tone spoke volumes. And so she left him.

CHAPTER II.

The season had ended, and my lady, with her husband and her retinue of servants, were located at Abbot's Rise, Mr. Haredeale's country residence. Just now the house was empty of guests, a most rare and noteworthy fact, Honora being solitary and *de-die* meetings between herself and her lord. There had been a marked coldness in her manner towards him, since his refusal to allow her sister's visit.

"Eily would have a humanising effect on me," she thought. "I am growing so horribly worldly and callous. This life does not satisfy me; I am sick of it. I am just ripe for any mischief, any wickedness," she said to herself, with her customary exaggeration. "I would readily give up all I have for a night of the dear familiar faces; and here, indeed, she spoke the truth; they will forget me, the little ones. I shall be as a stranger to them. I who love them so dearly," and she moved restlessly on her couch.

The door opened, and Simon Haredeale entered, an open letter in his hand.

"May I ask your attention a few moments, Honora?" he said, stiffly.

"Certainly. What is it you want?"

"I have a letter here from Maxford, an old friend of mine. He is a plantation owner, near Orleans—a cotton plantation."

"What does he want?" asked my lady, indifferently. "To come here?"

"No. Rather he wishes me to go over to him. Difficulties have arisen in the management of his concern. His servants are dishonest, and his crops inferior. He thinks I could work a reform if I would, having great confidence in my judgment."

"I daresay it is not misplaced," said Honora, sweetly. "Well, what shall you do?"

"Take the first mail out"—it struck coldly upon her, that he did not as much as plead for her consent, or consider her wishes in the least—"I can do no less. But as it would be ridiculous for you to stay on here alone, I would like to know what you propose doing?"

A great light leapt into the lovely eyes, and a bright flush stained the soft cheeks.

"Why, I shall go home. I cannot be guilty of extravagance there, you know, and it would be the height of decorum for me to return to my own people!" there was a touch of defiance in her tone, but Simon ignored it.

"I think your suggestion good; and, of course, you understand I shall defray all expenses your prolonged visit may occasion!"

"Thank you. How long shall you be from England?" she asked, as quietly as she could. She dared not give vent to her joy lest he should withdraw his consent.

"About three months, perhaps more. But I shall write you from time to time, to apprise you of my movements."

"Of course," said Honora. "I expect no less. And when do you go?"

"I think next Tuesday. You had best write to Ballyhoran to meet you at Cork, as the journey from there to your home is complicated, and horrible in the extreme. If you weary of your rustication I have no doubt some of your friends—Mrs. Warwick, for instance, will take you in!"

"I shall not claim their hospitality. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing. I will make my own preparations. I know just precisely what I shall want!" and then he went out; and the door being closed behind him she executed a wild dance round the room, laughing and crying together for sheer happiness. Nor could she control herself sufficiently to write home for several hours; but at last she sat down to her despatch, and scribbled a few hurried lines to Eily, her favourite sister, and next to her in years. An answer speedily came to her hurried, half-incoherent letter.

"MY DARLING HONOR,—

"Do I sleep? Do I dream? Do I wonder and doubt?

Are things what they seem? or are visions about?"

"Are you playing a trick upon us, or has old Bingleford really consented to allow a visit to these barbarous parts?"

"It is so long, so long, my dear ones, since we saw you, that my heart had no hope left of ever meeting you again; and, at times, as poor a creature am I, I need to think you had ceased to care for us. Now all the clouds are

gone, and there is nothing but sunshine before me. I only hope Bluebeard will stay six months instead of three. I should not cry if he never returned.

"The governor will meet you at Cork. I begged hard to share the journey, but he says he cannot afford double expenses, and I am absent to wish or expect it."

"You must bring no more gifts to Ballyhoran. Thanks to you we are all well clad now, but I cannot help thinking our good fortune is your misery, and I take no delight in my new and pretty gowns."

"The governor, as usual, is not too pleasant; but he will show his best side to you, for I can assure you Lady Haredale is an object for veneration in his sight."

"Patrick Pierpoint, our third or fourth cousin (I really don't know which), is staying with the Macarthy's, two miles off; but he is here every day, and proves a pleasant addition to our limited circle."

"Oh, Honey! Honey! I'll be counting the hours and the moments that shall pass between now and Tuesday; and the little ones are singing even now 'Come back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen.' We will be all mad with expectation until your arrival, and it's you that will be devoured with kisses anon. My humble duty to the Great Mogul, our love and best wishes for you.—Yours ever, "ELLY."

Having read her sister's letter, Honora ran hastily up to her room, and from the recesses of an old trunk drew out a tumbled, threadbare blue serge gown.

She had preserved it as carefully as though it were a holy relic, because it had been the last thing she had worn at Ballyhoran before her marriage was an accomplished fact.

With lips all smiling, and eyes moist with unshed tears, she donned the unbecoming garment. It was short in the skirt, the sleeve, the waist. It was almost painfully tight across the bust, but Honora loved it for the sake of the memories it brought with it.

She let loose her long waving black hair, and tying the strings of a cotton sun bonnet beneath her chin, looked archly into her mirror at her own reflection.

What a lovely, roguish youthful face it was! But its owner sighed, as she let her hands drop to their sides.

"No, I don't look the same any more than I feel the same. Oh! to be a thoughtless, happy girl once more!"

Then, with busy hands, she stripped off her homely garb.

"How surprised and pleased they will be to see me in the old familiar dress, for I'll wear it again and again in spite of my proud position. Proud (?)—oh, dear! oh, dear! how I wish I had never married!"

But Honora was not of a lachrymose disposition, and so she presently busied herself with preparations for her journey, buying gifts for Elly and all the small fry. To the "governor" she intended carrying a Bank of England note—the most acceptable present she could offer.

Simon Haredale was to leave Abbot's Rise at early morning, my lady at five thirty P.M., so that she was there to speed the parting.

"Good-bye!" she said, offering him a slender white hand. "I hope you will have a pleasant journey, and that you will write me at your early convenience."

"Good-bye!" he answered, "and in the fastnesses of Ballyhoran don't quite forget your dignity as my wife!"

Honora bit her lips to keep back angry words that rose to them. Then she said very gravely,—

"I hope, under any circumstances, I shall not do that. Let us part kindly. Who knows that we may meet again?" and for the first time in her life she lifted her face to him to be kissed.

"I see no reason for any display of sentiment," he remarked, in his matter-of-fact tone. "Hundreds undertake my journey

frequently, and, as a matter of course; I do not approve of the Darby and Joan style of business."

The blood rushed into her cheeks, and her eyes flashed dangerously.

"Neither do I!" she answered, with a short laugh; "but I thought it was the proper thing for husbands and wives to do on such an occasion," and turning on her heel she left him with great apparent calmness; but her heart was hot within her, and to herself she said, "Why did he marry me? Oh, why, why? He never loved me. He does not know what love means. Why will he do his best to make me hate him?"

But when she was well on her journey she forgot all unpleasant things. Her husband was as though he did not exist, for all her thoughts were full of home and her dear ones, of the good times that lay before them.

The Earl met her at Cork, and Honora, with her quick sense of humour, could but laugh at the deference he paid to her wishes, the extreme cordiality of his greeting—she remembered how different his manner used to be. And then she grew grave again, being not a little ashamed at his disreputable and dissipated appearance; but she did her best to hide this from him, and Ballyhoran was not by any means a thin-skinned man.

It was late the next night when they reached home; but all the children were up, and such a kissing and embracing as ensued it would be impossible to describe.

They all sat down to supper together—a noisy, happy, untidy crew—all chattering at once, all eager to impart the choicest news to Sister Honey, who had Barney (the baby of the family) on her knees.

She had never been so happy before, she said; and then finding her so unchanged, except that she was lovelier than ever, they kissed and fondled her again, laughing and crying in sheer excitement, until Elly forcibly carried her off to the great, bare draughty room they were to share together.

Despite her long journey and fatigue she was down first in the morning, and being bent upon forgetting the past three years she had dressed herself in the old blue serge, had let down her hair and tied on the yellow sun-bonnet, appropriated a pair of thick shoes belonging to Elly, who still slept.

Thus equipped, she went out into the balmy sweetness of the early August morning. A soft white haze partly obscured the hills and the distant sea; but it was enough for Honora that she trod her native soil, and breathed her native air.

She even took an interest in the scraggy pigs wandering at will through what was once a magnificent garden; but she quickly left them behind, and started for the open, intending to take a long walk before the late breakfast at the Castle.

But having climbed a low, broken wall, and dropped down into a green meadow, she heard a voice behind her call, "Stop a moment, Elly; what a hurry you're in!" and facing about she confronted a tall young man with remarkably golden hair, and remarkably blue eyes.

"Patrick!" she said, joyfully, extending a gloveless hand to him, "how good it is to see you again! Don't you remember me—Honora?"

And then his strong fingers clasped hers warmly.

"Really, Honora?" he asked, with a smile, that showed all his white teeth. "How could I guess that Lady Haredale would masquerade in her sister's clothes?"

"Don't call me by that name," she answered, poutingly. "I want all of you to forget I am any one but Honora MacDennis; and, indeed, my finery is not borrowed. Perhaps you don't remember I wore these identical articles of attire before—before I left home!"

"If you remember, I was away at the time. We have not met since you were fifteen. But you aren't changed in the least, or perhaps it

is that I have seen Elly growing up—and so like you—that you seem to be as familiar to me as she is. Do you know, Honey, I was quite afraid I should find you a lady of fashion—"

"Well, so I am!" she interrupted, gaily. "You should see me in my war-paint; but I am catholic in my tastes; I like to be all things to all men. In town I behave with beautiful propriety; at Ballyhoran I please myself entirely. Patrick, what were you doing so near the Castle, and so early?"

"To tell the truth the Macarthy's rise so late that before the breakfast bell goes I am positively famished, so I generally run over here, and Elly takes pity upon me. When I saw you scudding over that wall I thought my guide, philosopher, and friend had barely deserted me, and I should be left to starve until noon."

"Poor Patrick! I had no idea you were such a gourmand, or shall I say gourmet? Come back with me, and I will get you something to eat!"

He laughed.

"I'll come back certainly, but I doubt your culinary skill; and if you've been attending a school for cookery I distinctly decline to eat of your providing. I don't wish to die of dyspepsia!"

"I'll do my best; and, really, you should not ridicule the schools. They are admirable institutions in their way, because, you see, they prevent women flying from one place to another, and keep them out of mischief; then, too they help to reduce the surplus population. If dyspepsia carries off half our dudes, isn't that a matter for congratulation rather than grief?"

Patrick laughed, such a hearty, healthy, honest laugh that Honora could only join him, and the walk to the Castle was a merry one. Arrived there they found no one astride. The two domestics did very much as they pleased, and the Ballyhoran family kept what hours they liked.

"What shall we do?" said Patrick. "I'm so hungry I could eat a haystack!"

"So am I, but I'd like something more savoury than the stack. Wait a moment, let me think. Patrick, can you build a fire?"

"I can try."

"Eureka! I know where the wood was always kept, and there are some eggs in the kitchen. Faith, we'll not go without breakfast, after all. Hurry up with the kindling!" and then, as she meant business, she rolled up her sleeves beyond the dimpled elbows, and having found bread and butter proceeded to cut huge slices until she had quite a pile of them.

And Patrick having made a fire, she brought out a kettle, which he filled from the pump outside, they laughing all the while, like a couple of happy children.

In due time the coffee was made, the eggs boiled, and the two sat down to their impromptu meal.

"I'm sure a little labour sweetens one's food," said Honora, smiling across at Patrick. "This bread-and-butter tastes like angel's food!"

"It's the best thing I've ever eaten," the young man answered, helping himself to another thick slice; "but I don't know anything about its angelic properties. Honey, what would your new friends say could they see you now?"

"Only that this was a new whim of mine, and they would follow in my lead. I can assure you I am quite an important personage in society, whatever I may be here."

"Oh, here! Well, you are a little goddess; the Earl is always singing his daughter's (Lady Haredale's) praises."

"Oh, yes!" scoffingly, "it's wonderful what a glamour money throws over one. No more coffee? Well, we have nearly exhausted the supply; but if you wish it I can make more?"

"None for me, thank you. Shall we go out again?"

"With pleasure." Then as they rose, an

untidy, red-haired servant appeared. She looked surprised when she saw the remains of the meal.

"Shure, miss, it's meself would ha' rose early if ye'd ha' called me; 'tisn't fit the likes o' ye should demean yerself entirely by worrak o' the koinde."

"Nonsense, Bridget; and as I am going out now will you tell Miss Eily I shall be back in an hour." And out into the sunshine they went—this handsome young couple, who had such innocent, unaffected delight in each other's society; who dreamt no more of evil or grief arising from their companionship than would a little child. The white haze had lifted now, and before them rose the green hills, and flashed the silver streak of sea. The tears rose to Honora's eyes, as she turned quickly to Patrick, and laying her hand upon his arm, said under her breath,—

"I could be content to die, having once more seen these things!"

It was a very weary, but very happy Honora that returned home. Eily was in the garden with some of the small fry; and eight-year-old Barney, the last to rise, was still intent upon his breakfast.

"What I love about this place," said Honora, "is its liberty. We all rise when we please, go and come at our own sweet wills—there are no rules about anything, it is just heavenly."

CHAPTER III.

"HONEY, we're going to the shore; would you care to come?"

"Would I not? How many of us are going?"

"The family tribe, of course, and Patrick. I've packed up some bread and hard-boiled eggs, and we can get water at the spring. The boys will carry the baskets; but Honey, you'll spoil that smart gown with the sand and the water."

"Never mind my gown; give me my hat, my pretty colleen, and let us be off; happy days can never be too long."

What a noisy party it was that left the Castle ten minutes later! The boys out all manner of capers, the girls laughed and chattered in a most astonishing way, talking such utter nonsense in the brightest fashion, and Honora was the gayest of them all. She had drawn her dainty skirt up round her waist by means of a girdle, so that her movements should not be impeded, and when Emmet, the eldest boy, proposed a race, she was quite ready for the fun.

"Fooh!" said Mona, a long-legged girl of fourteen, "fashionable ladies can't run, they wear such tight corsets and silly skirts; and just to prove she was not a fashionable lady Honora competed for the prize Eily offered—an old Roman coin. She did not win, but she came in second, much to Mona's disgust, and Patrick, declaring she ought to have a consolation prize, led her off in triumph.

She was flushed and radiant, her eyes full of delight, her whole figure instinct with strong, glad young life; her long hair was blown about her face and shoulders in tangled masses, and her dress was in picturesque disorder. Simon Haredeale would have been horrified to see her in such a plight; but she was not thinking of him, or indeed of anyone or anything not connected with the present moment and its enjoyment.

So long as she lived Honora would never forget that long happy day down by the sea. They hunted for shells, made fortifications, paddled in the blue, unquiet water, behaving like very children. At noon they all sat down in the shadow of the rocks, and ate their frugal fare with a gusto which left no doubt as to their appreciation of it. Then Patrick told them strange and wonderful stories, and Eily sang wild lays of Ireland, whilst Honora lay back with folded hands and shut eyes, listening in a dreamy, happy state, and wishing the day might never end.

It was dusk when they trooped back to the

Castle, and dinner was already served, the Earl having no idea of suiting his convenience to that of others; but he greeted them cordially, being yet in a deferential state towards his prosperous daughter.

Familiarity breeds contempt, however, and as the days wore by, and he grew more accustomed to her dainty gowns, her jewels and her laces, he treated her very much as he did the others. But Honora was now no longer afraid, and, alas! she had no love for him; in fact, his children regarded him almost as a necessary evil.

August passed with lightning-like rapidity, and Eily, who was given to watching her beautiful sister, grew anxious about her; she loved her so wholly, so faithfully. She pitied her so sincerely because of her uncongenial marriage, and when she saw Patrick's unconscious devotion to her, her unconscious acceptance of it, she was troubled.

But despite her impulsiveness she was a wise little woman, and would say nothing that might hasten or bring about the catastrophe she dreaded. And Honora went her way, wholly oblivious of danger. She only knew a strange unrest possessed her, that her temper had grown less even, and that she was gay only by fits and starts. She had passed through three seasons without experiencing the least little heart-throb; though she did not love her lord, she never forgot her wife-hood. Then, too, Patrick was her cousin, though but a distant one, and they had been friends from their early days, when he, a big boy of fifteen, had often stood between her and her father's wrath—she being then a tiny, wilful, passionate child of ten summers, and no one thought it strange they were so often together.

The young man told her of his hopes for the future, his ambitious dreams. He was studying law, and in good time he meant to be a judge. And when he somewhat lamented his poverty she told him earnestly that it was better to be poor and happy than rich and unsatisfied; and his heart ached for her because he knew that she spoke from bitter experience.

She was so beautiful, so gracious, there was small wonder he liked her society, and he never stayed to question why he preferred it to that of Eily, who was lovely and winsome enough to please the most fastidious taste.

Early in September he walked over to the Castle to invite Honora and Eily to boat with him. The latter, however, declined, being but a timid sailor. Honora was delighted at the prospect, and hastened to get ready.

"Take plenty of wraps," said Eily. "The weather is apt to be changeable, and the wind is cool to-day, even here."

Honora laughed.

"I am not a hothouse plant!" she answered gaily, and kissing her hand to her sister, went out.

It was a brilliant morning, and Honora was in high spirits. She chatted and laughed throughout the walk to the shore where lay Patrick's boat—a mere cockle-shell of a vessel, and having helped her in, the young man took the oars, and began to pull vigorously.

"You are not tired of us yet?" he asked, lifting his flushed, handsome face a moment. "You think you can contrive to exist here until October closes?"

"It isn't existence," she answered, "it is real, earnest, joyous life. I wish I had never to leave Ballyhoran any more."

"But there must be so much to interest and amuse you in London?"

"Yes," whilst a shadow fell upon the brightness of her face, "but there is no one to love me." Then remembering that her words were a reproach to her husband, she added swiftly, "I mean I miss my own people so much. Oh! Patrick, it is awful to be homesick, to long and long vainly by night and day for the sight of one's dear ones, and the sound of their voices. I never knew how strong a hold they had upon my heart until I had lost them."

"Not lost them, Honey; and when a woman marries she naturally expects to leave her home for her husband's."

She stirred uneasily, as though the subject were unpleasant to her.

"But you will not be so lonely in future. I am going to town, you know, in December, and when the season begins we shall often meet."

A sudden sense of joy filled her. She laid out her hand to meet his, but drew it back quickly, and her voice was constrained as she said,—

"I shall always be pleased to see you, cousin." And a little later, to break the unusual silence which had fallen upon them, she asked, "Shall I sing to you?"

"If you will. You know I like to hear you always."

And then the wild, sweet voice broke into a strange, sad song; and as it rose and fell Patrick leaned upon his oars, drinking in the beauty of the face before him, noting the light and shadows in the ever-changeable eyes.

She sang of love—hopeless love; and carried away by the passion and pathos of music and words she forgot all else, and with tears raining down her cheeks and hands dashed looked she finished her ballad.

"You have saddened yourself," Patrick said, in a low, unsteady voice. "You should not sing of such sorrowful things."

She looked at him a moment, and her mouth quivered; then with angry hands she dashed aside her tears.

"I am a fool!" she said, and laughed. "I forgot it was all imaginary. Let me chase away the dismal impression I have made," and with that she broke into a merry, lilting air, and seemed wholly to forget her past emotion.

But Patrick interrupted her hastily.

"Honey, we must be getting home. The wind has changed, and I am afraid a storm is coming on."

He did not speak without reason. The sky was overcast, and the wind, suddenly gathering strength and fury, tossed the little boat hither and thither as though it were a feather. The waves broke over the sides, blinding the cousins with spray, and every moment matters grew worse. It was one of those sudden storms so common in the Irish Sea, and Patrick knew only too well what danger they were in.

"You are cold?" he said, breathlessly, for the exertion of keeping the boat in its course was telling upon him. "You are cold? Have my coat, Honora!"

"No, I shall do very well. Patrick, we are in no peril?"

"I hope not, dear," but his voice was not very reassuring. "Please Heaven we shall soon reach the shore. You are not afraid?"

"Only a little," bravely. "Do not mind me. Is there nothing I can do to help? Let me have the oars awhile!"

But he refused. Her strength was all too small for the task before him.

And then to increase their discomfort it began to rain, and when it rains in Ireland it does it thoroughly. There is no mincing of matters, but Honora would not utter one word of complaint, although she was wet to the skin, and could scarcely see her companion through the little streams of water running down her face. Her hat was a dragged mass, its feathers hung limp and wet over her brow, and her hair, becoming loosened, fell about her shoulders in damp luxuriance.

Then, suddenly, Patrick gave a sharp cry, as he lost his grasp on a oar. It was beyond his reach in a moment, and there they were on the open sea at the mercy of wind and wave. He looked at her in an anguish of self-reproach.

"Forgive me, if you can, that I have brought you into such danger?"

"You do not think we can reach home?" she asked, in a hushed voice. "You believe there is nothing left for us but to die bravely?"

He bowed his head, and she spoke again in a dreamy voice,—

"I would have liked to live a little longer, I am so young, and life is sweet; but—but, perhaps, it is better to go like this. Poor Eily! I should have liked to have said goodbye; she will mourn so bitterly for us?"

It was sad that in such a moment she should think of her sister, but never her husband.

"Don't talk like that, Honey; there may be hope for us yet. Oh! may Heaven pardon me that I brought you here!"

"I liked coming," she answered gently. "You shall not be angry with yourself. Neither of us could foresee such an ending to our trip!"

And then they were silent again and motionless, for there was now nothing left them to do but to hope and pray for deliverance.

Drifting hither and thither, tossed to and fro, in momentary danger of being engulfed, cold, wet, and hungry, they bore their calamity with what fortitude they could. At last it began to grow dark.

"They will be watching for us at home," Honora said, "and Eily will be weeping—weeping bitterly and hopelessly; there will be no one to comfort her. Patrick, it will soon be quite dark. What shall we do then?"

"There is nothing we can do, dear; we are utterly helpless!"

And then, when she could see him no longer, she stretched out her hands with a little wailing cry.

"Oh speak to me! speak to me! While you are silent I fear the worst!"

He caught and held the chill fingers.

"Honora! Honora! I do not let me die without telling you the truth I have been so long in learning. If I thought there was any hope for us I would cut my tongue out rather than speak words, which under any other circumstances, would be an insult to you. I love you! oh, my sweet! I love you!"

Her heart seemed to stand still, and her brain reeled. She understood now all that had been vague before, and, with a sob, she said,—

"Patrick! Patrick! I am glad to die now!" and those few words told him all the truth.

There, in the darkness, he sought and found her cold mouth, and kissed her once in solemn farewell, and still hand in hand they drifted on.

The morning broke bright and smiling; the wind had dropped, and it hardly ruffled the shimmering sea. There was no sign of last night's storm on shining shore, or fair, green meadows.

With a deep sigh, Patrick lifted himself upon his elbow, and immediately a pretty peasant girl came forward.

"Sure, it's kilt entirely we thought ye were when they bring ye in."

"Where am I, and where is she?" he asked, sitting erect. "I don't understand what has happened."

"Dade an' how should ye, seein' ye was like one dead? It was Michael Kelly and Con Malone as found ye. They were a-fishing, and the storrm it came, and they made for home. Sure they was nearly wrecked, they was, but they found ye in a worse plight still, and they fastened yer boat to the smack, and towed ye in. The lady is at Mother Cauty's cabin, and has slept like the angel she is."

"But what place is this?"

"Droghdaire."

"And how far from Ballyhoran?"

"Nigh fifteen miles, yer honor."

He started up.

"Bring me my clothes, please, and call the lady. No, no, my good girl," in answer to her hospitable entreaties, "we cannot stay. It is necessary we should reach Ballyhoran as quickly as possible; and although we cannot repay your kindness, rest assured you shall be recompensed for your trouble."

Half-an-hour later he and Honora had

taken train to Ballyhoran. Scarcely a word passed between them, and she was too shame-faced to meet his eyes. Oh, if she had but died! if she had but died! That was the burden of her heart's complaining. She was consumed with horror at the knowledge of her love for Patrick. Oh! why had she not been strong enough to hide it from him? She was a wife; how dared she let her thoughts and affections to centre upon him?

Eily, white as death, with swollen eyes and features, ran weeping to meet them. And as Honora felt the touch of the dear soft hands she fell about her neck with a low, wild cry, and then, before any could save her, sank to the ground in a huddled heap.

CHAPTER IV.

"I must go home! I must go home!" sobbed Honora, rocking herself to and fro. "I cannot stay here. Oh! Eily, do not try to keep me!"

"My dear, what has happened?" asked the younger girl, with her arms affectionately about her weeping sister. "Two days you have been like this, refusing to see anyone but me, and Patrick is devoured with anxiety. Honey, darling, have you nothing to tell me?"

"I am a wicked woman. Oh! I think my shame will kill me!" and a strong shuddering seized her. "I wish I had died that night at sea!"

Then Eily knelt down by her. Her face was inexpressibly sad, inexpressibly tender.

"Dear, is it Patrick? Ah, there is no need for you to answer. I know the truth, and I know, too, you have small cause to blame yourself, my poor, wronged, unhappy darling! You were bought and sold like a beast of burden—you, an innocent, ignorant child—at the mercy of two men like Ballyhoran and Haredale; but you are right and wise to go away. However great the wrong Mr. Haredale did you, you are still his wife, and the honour of his name is in your hands; but you shall not go alone. Take me with you, Honey, and I will do my best to teach you forgetfulness of—Patrick!"

"Will you come?" cried Honora, starting up, "will you, Eily? Then let us go to-morrow. I—I can't breathe here. I—I want to be at home!"

"Sit down and rest. I will do all that is necessary," and the unhappy girl gladly obeyed her.

But in the evening she cabled to Mr. Haredale that she was returning to Abbot's Rise, taking Eily with her. He did not trouble to reply until the next mail, when he remarked, with characteristic coldness, that she was quite at liberty to make her own arrangements, and from the first he had known she would quickly tire of her voluntary exile.

She laughed uncertainly as she read these words, then said pathetically,—

"Oh! why will he not make my duty easier. Why will he not let me care for him?"

She had resolutely refused to see Patrick again, although it almost broke her heart to refuse his passionate entreaty for one word of farewell.

She would wrong her lord no farther, and she was wholly unconscious that he had watched her going from afar, and prayed in his honest heart that all things goodly and glad should be hers, that the pain and desolation should be his alone.

She told Simon nothing of her adventure; she hoped he might never hear of it. She wanted to forget it if she could, and every trifling incident connected with it.

So she and Eily settled down at Abbott's Rise, and the people grew accustomed to the sight of the two beautiful girls riding and walking together.

They were not lonely, the county boasting many good families, so visitors were plentiful, and Eily was quite an attraction to many of the young fellows.

At one house they met the great poet. His eyes grew very pitiful as they rested on Honora's exquisite face, so softened and chastened.

"She has learned love's lesson!" he thought. "Poor girl! it has given her new beauty, but it has all but broken her heart!"

Then he went over and talked to her, and through her voice there ran the tremor of some new deep feeling, and he was confirmed in his belief.

With all his heart he pitied her, and he wondered not a little what the end would be for her. She was so young and so lonely, despite her many "friends." She was passionate and impulsive; what right had Simon Haredale to make such a nature subservient to his? and would she always be submissive to his will? Would she always remember his lawful claim upon her?

"Heaven help her," he thought, "and keep her good as she is beautiful!"

But she was not altogether unhappy in these days, having Eily with her, and being freed from Simon's presence. It was only when her sister had gone back to Ballyhoran, and Mr. Haredale returned that she realised to the full extent the misery that had befallen her.

But she hid her secret sorrow well. She made no complaint, and the only change in her was her anxiety to please her husband, the pathetic solicitude with which she waited upon his every wish.

She could not give him love, so she offered him the next best thing—duty. At first he was not so hard to please, being elated with the success of his mission, but he soon subsided into his old manner, and finding Honora submissive imposed not a little upon her.

In December he contested the borough of Abbot's Rise with a certain Lord Stapleford, and wished to impress his wife as canvasser; but Honora was a staunch Tory, Simon a thorough Radical, and she utterly refused to assist him.

It was a matter of principle with her, but Mr. Haredale considered she had no right to any principle that did not coincide with his, and there were few words between them.

In February they went to town, and there Simon met the Macarthy's, Patrick's hospitable friends and for the first time heard of his wife's adventure.

He was furious, being very proud of his name, and he hated to think that any scandal might attach to it. He went straight to Honora.

"Is this true?" he asked, repeating the story in a few brief sentences.

The colour flamed high in her cheeks.

"It is quite true!" she answered, in a low voice. "I am very sorry," and she lifted her beautiful eyes deprecatingly to his.

"I am more than sorry. I am surprised, ashamed, disgusted, that my wife—my wife, madam—should have been so careless of my name, should be the heroine of such a disgraceful adventure!"

"Disgraceful!" she echoed, passionately, then her hands fell to her side, and her head drooped. "You cannot regret the accident more than I do," she said, tremulously, but he was not easily pacified.

"Regrets, however sincere, will not silence people's tongues," he said, roughly. "You should have been more circumspect in your conduct. I thought I might rely upon your prudence and discretion. Whatever your other faults may be I did not count flagrant disregard of the proprieties amongst them."

On the white cheeks there grew and burned a crimson spot.

"Mr. Haredale," she said, "do not try me too far. I am not a meek woman, and I have borne much, oh! so much more than you realise. But I have done nothing to shame you or tarnish your name. Let me pass, if you please. I am weary of these endless recriminations."

He did not seek to stay her. Perhaps in her present mood he felt she was dangerous. But often in the days that followed he re-

proached her with her folly, until at times she felt she must resort with violence; and vaguely she wondered over her meekness, and grew half suspicious of it.

Then in early March Patrick and she were brought face to face again. They met at Mrs. Warwick's and unfortunately the Macarthy's were present too, and one of them, a mischievous, rattle-pated girl, sat by Simon Haredeale.

"Mr. Pierrepont is very handsome, is he not?" she asked, lightly. "Nearly all the girls I know are raving about him; but he seems never to think of matrimony. I don't believe he could tell if a girl were pretty or not unless it were Lady Haredeale. I've often wanted to tease him about her, but never could summon courage sufficient; and then Honora is not a flirt. But they were inseparable at Ballyhoran. How fortunate you are not a jealous husband?"

The iron-grey brows met together in a heavy frown; but Miss Macarthy was nothing if not headless, and she rattled on—

"They always were such friends as children, and everybody thought Patrick would marry his cousin—and everyone was mistaken. Mr. Haredeale, you will please excuse me now. I can see Althea Brodriok, and I want so much to speak to her," and then she tripped away, leaving Simon to his angry and unjust suspicions.

His eyes wandered to his wife's face. It was very pale, and there was a strained look about the mouth he had never seen there before. She was still talking to Patrick, and presently, laying her hand upon his arm, she veered round and made directly for her husband.

"Mr. Haredeale," she said, "allow me to introduce my cousin, Mr. Patrick Pierrepont. I think you have not met before!"

Simon bowed stiffly.

"It is no pleasure to me that we meet now," he said, "and I do not care to form new acquaintances."

The blood mounted to the young man's face, and hoarse words trembled on his lips; but Honora's entreating glance made him suppress them.

"Mr. Haredeale may rest assured I shall not force my acquaintance upon him," he said, addressing Honora. "Will you tell him that, if you please? And, say too, in my circle we practice mutual toleration and courtesy."

Then he was gone; and Simon, feeling after all he had come off second best, flashed in a white heat upon his pale young wife.

"Get your wraps. I am going home. And understand I forbid you ever to exchange words with that young coxcomb, either in or out of my presence. Do you hear, Lady Haredeale?"

"I hear," she answered, quietly. "You are arbitrary, but it is my duty to obey."

"Then see that you do your duty. I am not a man to countenance insubordination, and I will not have your name linked with that fellow's."

Not a word did Honora say. It seemed that all the life and light were crushed out of her. The unexpected meeting with Patrick had tried her terribly, and she felt she could bear no more.

Reaching home she went at once to her boudoir, hoping there for privacy, but she was doomed to disappointment.

It suddenly occurred to Simon to cross-examine his wife with regard to her feelings. He had never loved her, and in many things she had disappointed him, so that now his indifference had grown into positive dislike, and his nature was cruel enough to enjoy torturing her. She had so often defied and mocked him. It was his turn now, and he meant to make the most of it.

When she heard his slow and heavy step upon the threshold she slightly turned in her chair. She had not removed one single jewel or article of attire, and above all her bravery her face gleamed white and sad.

Another man would have pitied her. Most distinctly her husband did not.

"I want to speak to you," he said, grimly. "Are you at leisure?"

"Yes."

"I wish to know if ever you and Pierrepont were lovers? From something I heard to-night I believe you were. Tell me the truth."

"I will not lie to you," proudly. But he noticed that her hands toyed nervously with the laces and ribbons of her gown, that her bosom rose and fell agitatedly, and a gleam of triumph lit up his cold eyes. "I was too young when you married me to have any other lovers."

"That is evasive. Was Pierrepont ever a pretender to your hand?"

"No," with great distinctness. "I never met him from the day I was fifteen until I went to Ballyhoran last August. Are you satisfied?"

"No, I am not! I want to know what passed between you then."

"Mr. Haredeale, I am your wife, but that does not give you the right to insult me. In nothing have you suffered through me."

"Have I not?" he demanded, savagely. "Is not your name—my name—the subject for common gossip? I wish I had never seen you!"

"I echo that wish," bitterly. "I wish I were dead!"

"And so do I!" he retorted, roughly. "You are utterly useless to me. You have done nothing to further my interests. By my own efforts I won my seat. You might have done much; you did nothing. And I have laden you with gifts, have showered benefits upon you and yours—"

"Stop!" she cried, her great eyes flashing fire. "You may go too far. You have been generous with your money, but you have starved me of affection. Let it pass—only, only have some compassion upon my youth;" and then she stretched out beseeching hands to him, and all her lithe young form was shaken with sob.

In that hour she was weak, and at his mercy. Rest assured he would not spare her. He grasped the slender wrists in a cold and cruel grasp.

"You shall tell me the truth," he said. "You are so changed; there must be a great reason for that change. Did Patrick Pierrepont never breathe one word of love to you?"

"Have pity; oh, dear Heaven, have pity!" and she tried to shield her shame-stricken face from him, but he held her fast, watching with cruel satisfaction the slow tears fall and stain her pale cheeks.

"I shall not let you go until you make complete confession."

She lifted her head then, and a little of her old spirit came to her.

"We were alone together, death staring us in the face. We did not hope ever to reach the shore again; and—and—oh! cannot you guess? Must I tell you all? He told me I was dear to him!"

"This is interesting! And may I inquire, Lady Haredeale, what response you made?"

"I said I wished I might die then," she answered, with a little wild cry. "There is nothing more to tell. Loose me—let me go! Oh! that men can be so cruel!" and then she snatched her hands from his, and falling on her knees hid her face in the cushions of her chair, shuddering with the fierce emotion possessing her. A moment he stood over her, a cynical smile curving his thin lips.

"I shall know how to take care of you in the future," he said. "I thought I could trust you, but learning how mistaken I have been I shall guard you more carefully;" and then he went out, satisfied because he had humbled that poor child to the very dust.

With the new day came new trials. Perhaps Simon Haredeale did not really doubt his wife, but he professed to do so; and not a letter came to her that he did not first read—the letter-bag being always carried to him.

Sometimes he would retain possession of them for two or three days before so much as telling her they had arrived; but Honora uttered no remonstrance.

She was very meek in those days, and had such a painful sense of her own shortcomings. She often met Patrick in society, but no word passed between them; and he would not augment her misery by forcing himself upon her notice.

It was observed by all that Lady Haredeale was losing much of her brilliancy, that she had grown pale and ethereal in her appearance; and many speculations were rife as to the cause of the change, but only the poet knew.

And between husband and wife matters daily grew worse. Bizarre as she would Honora could not please, and the time was near when she would no longer make the effort, or endure Simon Haredeale's insults. She was not naturally meek, and she had borne much.

CHAPTER V.

THINGS went from bad to worse, until at times Honora was almost desperate. It was in this frame of mind she attended a ball given by a great leader of society, and she had taken special pains with her toilet, so that Simon might have no cause for complaint on that score.

She wore white—pure white, without a fleck of colour to mar its stainlessness. There were pearls about her throat and wrists—pearls in the raven masses of hair, in the tiny ears; and she looked almost like a being from another world, with her white, sad face, and deep grave eyes.

"One would think from your attire," growled Simon, "you were a bride or debutante! It is so utterly insipid, and you have grown too pale for it. For Heaven's sake, my lady, impart some colouring to it!"

A faint flush rose to her cheeks, but without a word she took a deep crimson rose from a vase close by, and fastened it on her breast. Then, without a word, she went down and allowed him to assist her into the carriage.

She had no heart for gaiety; but Simon had insisted she should attend this ball, and thinking bitterly, "He is my master, he has a right to command," she yielded.

She wished she had not, when she entered the flower-wreathed, perfumed room, for the first to meet her was Patrick.

One glance he gave at the pale-changed face, and then he went towards her. She was in trouble, he must do his best to help her. Surely his love gave him that right?

"You will give me one dance?" he said, quietly, ignoring Simon.

"I think not!"

"But," with a flash in his eyes, "we are relatives, and unpleasant remarks are already being made upon our apparent intimacy."

Now Simon Haredeale hated nothing so much as criticisms of himself and his belongings, so he said, sourly,—

"Give your cousin your tablets," and Patrick, taking them from Honora, scribbled his initials beside the first waltz. But he had no intention of dancing. He must see her alone for a few moments. The change was so grievous to him that he feared the worst. Where were all her smiles and roguish speeches? Where was the brilliancy which had marked her out from all other women? Gone! She was but the shadow of her old self; her face wore the impress of grief. Perhaps Simon Haredeale did not rest content with words alone. Perhaps he even struck her (in this he wronged the man), and he remembered that her mother had died of a slow, wasting ailment. He must save her! She might never be to him more than she was now; but love should be unselfish, should not seek its own, and so he said within himself, "At any cost, I must rescue her from this cruel life!"

"When their waltz came he went to her. 'I am not going to dance,' he said, with quiet authority. 'I want to talk instead, so come with me into the conservatories; they are quite deserted now!'"

Without a word she obeyed. She hardly cared, that night, what she did, and she was blissfully unconscious that Simon was following in their wake; that when they halted he halted too, and screening himself behind a mass of greenery, listened and watched.

He had not found his matrimonial venture answer his expectations. His wife was not the meek Griselda he wished her to be. He wanted to gain unlimited power over her, and he believed to-night would give him that authority he craved!

"Well!" said Patrick, in so low a voice that Simon found it hard to catch his words, "well, what have you to tell me, Honey?"

"There is nothing to tell," wearily, "nothing new!"

"You are hiding something from me. You think it your duty to screen that wretched husband of yours from just punishment, Honora, does he strike you?"

"Oh, no," with a hard little laugh. "It has not come to that. He would not dare. But, Patrick, if you only wished to speak of him I must decline to prolong our interview. He is my husband; it is not for me to complain. Let me hide my skeleton as best I may!"

"But I cannot bear to see you thus unhappy! It unmans me."

"No life is utterly without shadow," she said, patiently. "Only the shadow has fallen on mine so early, and found me so unprepared to meet it. I used to be such a happy, light-hearted girl. When I remember myself as I was I could cry for pity—not for myself, but for the Honora that was then. She never dreamt of sorrow. She was full of strong, animal life, and everything looked bright to her. Sometimes, I think, she might have grown into a good woman under other circumstances. She had such capacities for love!"

"Don't!" the young man said, hoarsely. "It hurts me to hear you speak of yourself as though you were dead. Oh, Honey! Honey! ours is a hard fate! My dear! oh, my dear! is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing but to leave me to myself. It is better so. I—I am not so strong as I used to be, and I might not always be able to do my duty to—to my husband if we met often. And with Heaven's help I will keep my marriage vows to the letter. Alas! alas! if I could only keep them in the spirit! Dear Patrick, have no fear for me. Other women are more unhappily situated than I. Other women are beaten, and publicly insulted. I suffer no such brutality, no such degradation."

"But you are daily wasting under the burden you bear! Honora, will you go back to Ballyhoran?"

"No. What reception do you think my father would give a runaway wife? Don't you know yet? He would sell his soul for gold, and that he believes money is the one good thing. Then remember how harshly this nice charitable world of ours judges a woman who leaves her husband. Only under extreme pressure will I quit the shelter of his home. My name is dear to me. I could not suffer shame and live!"

"But you will let me see you now and then? If you are in trouble you will send for me? You will let me spend myself in your dear service!"

"No, no!" wildly, and her hands went up to clasp her aching temples. "I dare not. Oh, I dare not! I am best alone. Oh, far best. And you, Patrick, leave me now. I should like to rest here a little while; the light and music bewilder me. Good-bye, good-bye!"

He had taken her hands in his, and now he held them fast, unconscious of the malevolent face gleaming white through the green foliage.

"Kiss me," he entreated. "Kiss me once, in token of farewell. I hoped to do so much for you, I have done nothing. Honey! Oh,

my dear!" but she snatched her hands from his hold.

"Go," she said. "It is shame enough for me to love you. I will wrong Simon Haredale no further. Good-bye. Forget me, and be happy!"

Without a word he went, and that poor soul sank upon her knees, praying wildly that death might come to her whilst she knelt. And even as she prayed Simon issued from his hiding place; and bidding her rise told her harshly he had both heard and seen all that had passed between herself and Patrick Pierrepont.

She dragged herself to her feet.

"Then you know that I am your true wife, even though I do not love you!" she said, heavily.

He laughed scoffingly. He knew she was good and innocent; perhaps he hated her the more for that.

"Let me have no heroics; they are out of place here," he said. "Draw your cloak about you, and come back with me to the house. I want our friends to see what a loving couple we are!"

"Let me go home!" she entreated. "I am not well. Indeed, I speak the truth!" but he would not hear her.

"You boasted of your intention to do your duty. Your duty is to obey me!"

"As you will," she answered, with a flash of her old spirit, "but there is a limit to everything. Obedience may become impossible, and human patience is not exhaustless!" Then she drew her cloak about her shoulders, and lightly touching his arm with her hand went back to the gay throng. But it was noticed that night by many she didn't dance, and a whisper went round that Lady Haredale was going as her beautiful mother had gone, and that her lord was the only creature who refused to see this.

They left early, and the drive home was a quiet one; but in the privacy of the drawing-room Simon spoke his mind freely, until the slumbering passion in Honora's heart woke into keener life. She sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing, her bosom heaving.

"Silence!" she said, "silence! I will not suffer such contumely! Oh, coward, so to insult a helpless woman!"

"Neither helpless nor friendless," he retorted, "having so gay a gallant for your champion!"

She went quite close to him, and looked fearlessly into his cold eyes.

"If you have a single manly instinct you will not drag the absent into this most unseemly quarrel. Vent your malice upon me. The law will not help me so long as you neither strike nor desert me—and I am too proud to complain."

He was mad with anger at her defiance, and he spoke such words as were a shame for him to utter, and for her to hear. If possible, her white face grew whiter yet, and a wild light leapt into her lovely eyes; but when she spoke her voice was very low, and he knew he had goaded her to rebellion.

"All is over between us," she said, in soft, cold tones. "You have left me no alternative. I will live with you no longer, let the world say what it will. I will never forgive you the vile words you spoke. I am no more your wife." She stripped off her wedding-ring, and laid it on the table before her. "Do not try to coerce me. I prefer death to a renewal of this wretched life. If you can legally free yourself of an unloved and unloving wife, lose no time in doing so!" and then she passed out of the room, and up to her own chamber.

She looked the door against all intruders, and sat down to think over her future. She never would forgive Simon's gross insult; she never again would sit at his table, or wear the jewels and dainty gowns he provided—so she said to herself, and she was not a woman to break her word. She would leave him and the old life behind. In some way she would earn her bread, and it would be the sweeter for the struggle made to win it.

Simon Haredale really wished he had controlled his passion more, and acknowledged to himself that he had tried Honora a little too far, but he never doubted her ultimate surrender. She had been so meek of late. Then, too, he hated to figure in a scandal, and was half-inclined to hold out the olive branch to her. So he went to bed and slept heavily until quite late in the morning. Breakfast was prepared for him, but Honora was not at the table.

"Where is her ladyship?" he asked a servant, listlessly.

"She has gone out, sir, and she told me to say she was not coming back!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE shock of the news was terrible to Simon. For a moment he could not speak; for a moment he doubted the utter purity of the girl whose heart he had done his best to break. After all, there would be a scandal, and he writhed when he thought of that. Then he asked of the curious, watchful servant,—

"Did her ladyship say where she was going?"

"No, sir! She said she would write to you in a few hours, and I was not to tell you she had gone until you inquired for her. I hope, sir, that you will not discharge me, I only obeyed orders!"

"I shall not discharge you; but I shall be obliged if you will keep this matter as quiet as possible. If any one calls inquiring for me, say that I shall be in shortly."

He hardly knew what he intended doing as he traversed the busy streets, and almost unconsciously his steps turned towards Patrick's chambers. But when a little way from them he saw him coming, his arm linked in that of a friend; they were discussing some legal problem eagerly, and passed without seeing him, although by stretching out his hand he could have touched them.

So she had not sought refuge with her lover, and a flush of shame crimsoned his cheek that he could for a second hold her guilty of such a crime. Where should he seek her? Had she already started for her own home? Hardly that, for her father would be the first man to uphold Simon's authority, and send her back to him. Had she, in her mad despair and outraged dignity, taken the life which, but for him, might have been so fair? He shuddered and grew pale at the thought—if she were dead, would an English jury hold him guilty of her death?

But Honora, despite all the sadness of her life, had never meditated such an awful step, neither had she dreamed of returning to Ballyhoran, and her father's coarse abuse. When she turned her back upon her home she went straight to Mrs. Warwick, her true friend and adviser. It was still early, and the lady had not left her boudoir; but she gave orders for Honora to join her, and when she entered, rising, took the slender cold hands in hers.

"My dear, what does this mean?"

"It means I have left my husband and my home for ever!" tragically.

"Oh no, no! It cannot be so bad as that!"

"It is; and I have come to you for help. You will not refuse it?"

"No; but perhaps reconciliation is possible. It is an awful step you meditate. Honora, dear, the world is very hard upon women who leave their lords."

"I know. But wild horses should not drag me back again! I will die first! I have suffered in silence so long, so long! I have borne so much! But last night he spoke such awful words to me—of me—that no woman would ever forget or forgive. I can't go home to my father. You know what manner of man he is, and how hard it is to find food and clothing for them all? I have no one in the world to help me if you refuse!"

"I have told you I will not, dear. But, oh, I am afraid for you! You are so young and

so beautiful to be alone. Take care you do not spoil your life."

"It is already spoiled!" bitterly. "The only thing I can hope for now is peace, and a chance to win my bread. In my trouble I remembered you, and something you said the other day. When do you start for Melbourne?"

"At the earliest opportunity. It is Gregory's only chance," and the young wife's face saddened. Her husband's health had long been a source of anxiety to her, and now the medical men had declared nothing but a sea voyage could save him. "We should have gone by the *Hopeful* last week but for the children's sakes."

"Then you have found no one yet to charge of them?" eagerly.

"No, it is a difficult task. Oh, my little darlings! how shall I bear to leave them?"

"Will you give me charge of them? They love me. You know I would do my duty towards them and you. Don't say no, Lucille?"

"You will go back from your bargain when Mr. Haredeale apologises."

"I shall not! No apologies will blot out his offence!" and the beautiful mouth looked very resolute, the grey eyes were full of angry indignation.

"Dear Honora, there is no one to whom I would confide my children so willingly as to you. But I hardly think you understand what your position would be. You are accustomed to luxury and society. Well, Beechey House, where the children are to reside until we return, is a six roomed cottage in the hamlet of Beechey, a most remote Devonshire district. The only attendant will be a middle-aged, capable woman (Briggs); and the salary we offer the lady who is willing to bury herself alive is only forty pounds. We are by no means rich, and Gregory's illness has caused us many fresh expenses."

"Before I married, forty pounds would have seemed a fortune to me! Lucille, will you accept my services?"

"Yes, dear, if Mr. Haredeale has nothing to urge against your plan."

"He will not interfere; he will be glad to know he is rid of me. And I will take Mamie and Grace to Beechey to-morrow if you wish. The earlier we go the happier I shall be."

Then she sat down and wrote to Simon; and this is the letter that was awaiting him on his return home:—

"I have left you for ever. Nothing will induce me to renew the old relationship; the words you have spoken have raised an impassable barrier between us. I tried to do my duty honestly as your wife, but you would not allow me to succeed. I ask nothing of you, I will accept nothing. In casting off the cruel fetters that so long have bound me I cast aside everything but my own dignity, and my own self-respect. Your name I leave you stainless as on the evil day it first was mine. Should you desire to know anything connected with our household arrangements you can communicate with me at Beechey House, Beechey, Devon. For the rest, may you be happier without me than ever you have been with."

"HONORA."

So she was gone. The letter dropped from his hand, and he sat gazing out of the window with vacant eyes. Then he murmured slowly,—

"The mermaid! Well, let her go! Who cares? And there need be no scandal."

Neither was there. When it became known Mr. and Lady Haredeale had separated, the cause assigned for such an act was "incompatibility of temper;" and some commiserated Simon, some Honora, and spoke of the sudden change in her, whispering that Simon had not been the most amiable of husbands.

She had shone for three seasons like a brilliant star, and now that her glory was dimmed it was best she should be forgotten. And before the summer ended the fashionable

world had ceased to discuss her or speculate on her probable woes.

Simon never replied to her letter. If she had not shamed him she still had made him appear ridiculous, and the man's hard nature would not forgive that offence. So he shut up his town house, giving Honora's fiery over to the moths and the dust, sending her jewels to his bankers.

He went into chambers, gave *recherché* dinners, dabbled a little in literature, and a great deal in politics, and did his best to forget the beautiful girl-wife away in Devon. When he remembered her it was to wish her dead.

Honora herself was not wholly unhappy. She loved her little charges. The healthy, simple life suited her; and, despite all her trouble, all the passionate yearnings of her passionate young heart, the colour came back into her cheeks, and only by looking into the depths of her sad eyes could one guess that she had not passed through life untouched by grief.

From Eily she heard frequently, and her letters were a source of comfort to her. The Earl, too, wrote at first in an expostulatory tone; but when he found she paid no heed to his remonstrances, he stormed and blustered in a fashion that would have disgraced a bargee.

So Honora preserved a dignified silence, and for the future consigned all his letters, unread, to the flames. It was the wisest thing she could do under the circumstances.

Once, too, Patrick had written, begging her to accept the half of his small income, and praying permission to correspond with her. It is needless to say she refused both requests, although, indeed, she would have been glad to receive news of him; but in her peculiar position she must abstain even from the appearance of evil. Those she loved, those who loved her, should never wear the blush of shame because of her.

So she held on her way resolutely—such a changed Honora; so gentle, so unselfish, so ready to yield her will to others. She who had ever been wilful, so untiring in her care of the little ones, so sympathetic with the poor around that they regarded the "lovely lady" almost as an angel.

Of what she suffered then she said no word. Honora Haredeale was not a woman to wear her heart upon her sleeve, being proud as she was pure.

In November she received news from Ballyhoran. Eily was to be married—not sacrificed. A young English gentleman of fortune, staying with the Macarthis, had seen and fallen in love with the beautiful Irish girl, who fully reciprocated his affection.

"The governor," wrote Eily, "will not hear of your return for my marriage; but Walter (isn't it a pretty name?) says I shall not be disappointed of my wish to see you. And so, Honey Mavourneen, prepare for our coming. We shall be with you on the twentieth, just a fortnight after our wedding; and, oh! my dear, my poor, unhappy dear! I hope you will like Walter for my sake. I am blessed beyond all girls, but I do not like to boast of my fortune to you who have sorrowed so long and suffered so much. One thing more, aroon, Walter bids me say that when your engagement ends you are to consider my home yours, because my sister must be dear to him as his own!"

Honora wept a little over that letter; she was not much accustomed of late years to kindness, and then she set to work to improve the rooms the newly-married pair were to occupy, so the time passed quickly enough.

On the twentieth she dressed herself carefully in one of her new plain toilets, and waited with what patience she could for the arrival of her guests.

Eily had distinctly said she did not wish her to meet them at the primitive station, because she was sure to behave like a donkey.

But when Honora heard the rumble of the

rickety old fly wheels she ran out to the gate; and Eily, disclaiming all assistance to alight, rushed to meet her; but not a word did either say until she had cried and laughed a little; then Eily began,—

"Oh! Honey, aroon, how pale you are, how my heart has bled for you! You never doubted my love for you, did you, Mavourneen, even when I found a new love—"

"Who is waiting to be introduced. I am Walter Austin, Lady Honora, and I intend being a model brother!"

He was a very pleasant-looking young fellow, with honest, well-opened blue eyes, and Honora's heart warmed towards him.

"I am sure we shall be good friends," she said, giving him her hand; and so, indeed, from that day forth, through all their lives they were.

CHAPTER VII.

MARCH had come, March with its cold winds and pale sunshine; still, March with a growing promise of beauty, for the daffodils were showing their pale green buds, and little tender shoots were visible on tree and shrub. Everything was waking to life; but on his bed lay the member for Abbot's Rise—dying!

He had succumbed all at once to a complication of diseases, and the doctors who came and went looked grave as they bent above him.

He did not himself believe there was danger. He had always been such a strong, active man until now, and he had lived so temperately. He was not an old man yet, but a little passed fifty, so he was very hopeful of recovery.

But it was lonely lying in the great stately chamber, tended only by hirelings. He had not a relative in all the world. He had never thought or cared about this before. He had never tried to form any real friendship, but now he did wish there was someone to remember him, and to affectionately minister to his wants.

There was his wife, of course; but she had left him, and he would never forgive her. The day after her flight he had made a new will, revoking all his former bequests, and leaving his colossal fortune exclusively to charities. There were no legacies to his servants, they were paid for their services well through his life, why should his death benefit them?

Now, as he lay on his bed, he grimly smiled,—

"Her ladyship would like to know of my illness. She would be more rejoiced still at news of my death; but it won't benefit her pecuniarily. No, she shan't have a penny of my money. If she counts on my repentance—and for what have I to repent?—she will be delightfully disappointed!"

The thought was pleasant to him, and afforded him satisfaction throughout the day.

But that very night he became so violently ill that his physicians were summoned in hot haste. Simon with all his faults was no coward, and bore his agony (which must have been extreme) with the stoicism of an Indian brave.

"Am I in danger?" he asked, quietly.

"You have been so from the first, Mr. Haredeale. I feel it my duty to tell you, if there is anything you wish to do, any friend you wish to see, there is no time to lose."

The man's heart gave one wild leap, and for a moment a frantic terror flooded all his being. But he gave no sign, and presently asked,—

"How long do you give me, doctor? Let me know the truth?"

"Humanly speaking I do not think you can last longer than three days. All that could be done to save you has been done, but you are beyond mortal skill!"

"Thank you," Simon answered, in a low tone. "You may leave me now. I have got my death sentence, I want to think it over;" and being left alone he turned his grey face to the wall, and fought fiercely with the agonising fears that tortured him. He clung to life

with dog-like tenacity—not that his life had been a particularly happy one; but then

‘The warmest and most loathed earthly life
Is a paradise
To what we fear of death.’

At least, so it was with Simon. And he lay through all the dark hours of that dark night, struggling with that nameless, awful horror possessing him. And then he thought bitterly when he was gone, there would be no one to mourn for him, or pause to drop a tear upon the grave where he lay low.

Looking back through all the years which had gone, he could not recall one kindly action or generous deed of his, which had gladdened some weary heart. He had been upright and just in all his dealings, but never generous; and now he could remember so many cases where his help had been prayed and coldly refused—so many times, when he might have relieved some cruel necessity, and had failed to do so.

He had been anxious only to add pound to pound, to increase the fortune bequeathed him by his father, that he had never had time to form friendships, or indeed, to give a thought to the affections.

And then his mind strayed to Honora, and he saw now, how from the first he had wronged her, how his coldness had changed, and for awhile had warped all her better nature. What a bright girl she had been when first they met, and how earnestly in the early days of their marriage she had striven to please him, and to win a word of kindness from him!

The scales had fallen from his eyes now with a vengeance, and in shuddering humility he prayed,—

“Heaven forgive me. I have behaved like a fiend. I deserve to die as I have lived! alone!” and yet, oh yet what an awful sense of desolation was upon him. He wondered how Honora looked now, and if he sent for her, would she come? She had just cause to refuse any request of his. What a triumph for her to know she had it in her power to refuse him any boon. No, he would not summon her to his side. He was not yet brought down to the dust. But when morning came he could bear the reproaches of his conscience no longer. Should he leave that young creature, bound to him by every law of Heaven and man, poor and helpless in a cruel world? He could not do it; so a messenger was despatched for his solicitor, who came in haste, Simon Hare-dale being a client of importance.

The old will was destroyed, and by the new Honora was made legatee of all Simon's fortune, with the exception of a few charitable bequests.

He placed no restrictions upon her, and only begged that in the event of her marrying a second time, the ceremony should not take place before a year had passed. He felt happier and more restful when he had done her this tardy justice, and fell presently into a deep sleep; and as he slept he dreamed that Honora came to him, not proud and cold, as when he had last seen her, but with tears in her lovely eyes; and that she forgave him freely and fully all the pain and sorrow he had made her suffer.

When he awoke the dream was still strong upon him. He turned to his valet.

“You know your mistress's address. Telegraph for her. No, give me a pencil, let me write the message myself; and he feebly traced the lines. “I am dying. In token of your forgiveness come to me!”

He waited impatiently for her reply, and when it arrived, tore open the envelope with trembling, feverish fingers.

“I am on my way. Shall be with you to-night!” and then he fell back upon his pillows. The excitement had been too great for him, and for very long he lay in a heavy swoon.

But towards evening he rallied, and as the time drew near for Honora's arrival he insisted that the room should be made bright

with flowers, and all evidences of sickness, so far as possible, removed.

“She was always fond of dainty things,” he thought, and his heart grew tender to her then. Ah! said it was he had closed it so fast against her in the old days.

Honora reached Abbot's Rise about nine. She was very pale, and trembled slightly. Although she had never loved him, still he was her husband, and it was sad to think he was dying all alone.

As she entered the room he looked eagerly towards her; and saw her as he had done in his dream, tearful and pitiful; and with a sigh of pure gratitude, he put out his hand to her.

“Honora, this is good of you!” he said.

“It is more than I deserve.”

She sank on her knees beside the bed.

“I am so sorry, so sorry!” she said, tremulously. “I did not know, or I would have been with you before.”

“You are heaping coals of fire upon my head!” he murmured. “You poor child, how can you ever forgive me, or think of me without weeping?”

“Hush!” she said, ever so gently. “Let the dead past bury its dead, and I too was to blame. I was very wild and troublesome.”

“And I made no allowance for your youth. I did not care about your happiness. Oh! wife—wife—I have wasted all my chances. I have done nothing good or great in all my days—and now my time is over!”

“We must all plead guilty to doing the things we ought not to have done, and leaving those things undone we ought to have done,” she answered, gravely. “Simon, if we could only begin again how much better we would do!”

It was the first time she had ever called him by his Christian name, and it touched him to the heart—that heart which, until now, when it was too late for love and joy—had lain cold and dead within his breast.

“Then you do not wish me gone? You are not in a hurry to be free?”

And then she rose and kissed him on the brow with a tenderness that had something maternal in it. Next she threw off her wraps, brought him wine to drink, and sitting beside him held his hand in her strong, warm clasp. Nor would she leave him any more until the end, but snatched a few moments' sleep, sitting in the great easy-chair.

All through the third day it was evident he was sinking fast; but although his sufferings were intense he made no moan, and to the last he was conscious.

He could not bear Honora to leave his side a moment, and he would take nothing save from her hands. Once he said with a little sigh,—

“Oh! what I have missed! what I have missed! I might have made you love me, but I never tried—I never tried.” And then a little later, as the light of life burned low, “Will you kiss me, wife?” And for the first and last time their lips met. When Honora drew back there were tears upon Simon's face, which were not all her own.

He lay very quiet, and she thought he slept. There was such peace on the worn face, such a new and inexplicable tenderness about the mouth, which had always been so grim and hard.

But at the dawning of a new day he opened his eyes, and a sudden light of recollection and satisfaction flashed into them. He feebly put out his hand to reach hers, and as feebly murmured,—

“Have no fear of the future. I—I have—not—left—you—penniless!” and those were his last words.

He gradually sank into a stupor, breathing slowly and faintly. At the rising of the sun Honora was a widow. Realising this she gave one sharp, quick cry. Then, worn with her watching and ministrations, she sank into a huddled heap upon the floor, and for awhile was wholly oblivious of all that had gone, all that was passing.

It was a startling surprise to her to find herself the possessor of so great a fortune. At first she could not believe the evidence of her own senses, but when she had grasped the truth, and realised all that this meant for her and her dear ones, the quick tears came to her eyes, and there would never be a time when she would not remember Simon Hare-dale with grateful tenderness.

She went back to Beechey for two months, and then on the Warwick's return she sent for Mona and the boys to Abbot's Rise, the Earl being only too happy to part with his numerous brood.

It was not long before Mona left for a home of her own. “Those Ballyhoran girls had such luck,” a jealous young lady observed. “They all secured good *partis*, for Mona married a rich baronet, who positively adored her.”

Then, though it was a cruel wrench, Honora sent the boys to Eton, impressing upon them the necessity of making the most of their golden opportunities, and bidding them for her sake and the sake of their ancient name to be brave and honest gentlemen.

Their vacations they would spend with her. Indeed, it was soon impossible for them to return to Ballyhoran, as the Earl contracted a marriage with an illiterate woman, widow of a wealthy butcher, who was violently opposed to receiving her stepchildren.

So Honora lived her quiet, lonely life, whilst the seasons came and went, whilst the summer faded into autumn, and autumn fled at the advent of winter. Then came the new year; but the spring had ripened into summer before Patrick sought her out. Pride had restrained him, and her fortune had stood between them. Then, too, she might have changed. But at the close of June he called his recreant courage to the fore, and went down to Abbot's Rise.

He found her walking in the gardens, and when she saw him coming she stood still, her colour ebbing and flowing, trembling so greatly she could scarcely support herself.

“Honora—Honey,” he said, in a voice husky with emotion, “I have come back to you!”

“Yes,” she said, under her breath, and waited for him to speak again.

“You know why I have come, and what hope I nurse? If I am presumptuous, tell me now, and I will go away to trouble you no more. But oh, my darling! oh, my darling! no man will ever love you so well as I. No man hold you so dear, reverence you so highly! Tell me, what will you do with me? Am I to go or stay?”

She looked at him, smiling through her tears.

“You need not go,” she said, and the lovely colour grew upon her cheek as she yielded herself to his embrace.

“But,” said Patrick, after a long, ecstatic pause, “I am a poor and struggling man. You might do better, Honey.”

“I never could do better than marry the man I love with all my heart.”

A speech which met with its just reward.

What need to chronicle their sayings and doings further? It is enough that they were married, and as the old fairy tales say, “lived happily ever after.”

[THE END.]

HORSERADISH is said to be a cure for the grip. This is a simple remedy, and can be taken at pleasure during the day. Indeed, old-fashioned people used to carry a bit of the humble root about with them, from which they took frequent bites to relieve a cough.

It is curious to note the nationalities, by descent, of the Presidents of the United States. Three—Washington, Madison, and Lincoln—were English; three—Monroe, Jackson, and Grant—were Scotch; and one, Jefferson—perhaps “the noblest Roman of them all”—was a Welshman.

FACETIÆ.

SPINSTER AUNT (who has just given Reginald a piece of information): "Now, Reginald, there's a wrinkle for you." Reginald: "Is that how you got all yours, auntie?"

WICKIAMS: "Ah, well, I suppose my days for falling in love are past." Wickiams: "In that case, then, I suppose you will start out looking for a wife with a little money."

"Your name is Julia Miller." "Yes, your honour." "Tell me how old you are?" "Twenty-five your honour." "So! Well, now that you have given your age, we will administer the oath."

HARDTACK: "How are you getting along with your new clerk? Is he a good man?" Clambske: "He works like a charm. Did you ever see a charm work?" "I never did." "Well, that's him."

TOO GREAT A STRAIN.—Physician: "What is your profession, sir?" Patient (pompously): "I'm a gentleman." Physician: "Well, you'll have to try something else; it doesn't agree with you."

"BRIDGET, what is that child crying so for?" "Shure, mum, he just dranked all his soothin' syrup, and et the cork, and I don't know now what ails him unless it's the bottle he wants to swallow."

OMNIBUS CONDUCTOR: "Will any gentleman ride outside to oblige a lady?" Gruff Old Gentleman: "There's no lady to oblige! No lady would turn a gentleman out of his seat and let him get frozen."

"When I was a little boy," lied a very stupid society man to a young lady, "all my idleness on life were cheatered on being a clown." "Well, there is at least one case of gratified ambition," was the reply.

INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.—"Now, children, what can birds do that we cannot?" (expecting, of course, that they would say "Fly.") But they do not. One bright lad puts up his hand and says: "Please, sir, lay eggs."

WIFE: "I must have a new chimney-piece." Husband: "But I can't afford it." Wife: "But I must have it!" Husband: "Well, get it! We must have peace, whether we can afford it or not."

CUMSO: "Are you cutting the sensational articles out of that paper before taking it home to your wife and daughters?" Banks (handling the shears): "No; I'm cutting out the millinery advertisements."

"Do brutes have a language?" asked the president of the Millville Literary Circle at a recent meeting. "Do they?" replied the secretary; "you ought to hear my husband when he loses his collar button."

UNFETTERED AND ELDERLY FEMALE (to photographer): "How much would you take me for?" Photographer: "About eighteen, madam." He obtained the commission for the photos.

FIRST STUDENT: "You told me you had a rare and curious manuscript to show me. I see nothing here but a receipted tailor's bill." Second Student: "And you see nothing rare curious about that?"

FIRST SWEET GIRL: "Just think! The Czar of Russia has a throne that cost more than £2,000!" Second S. G.: "Really? Why, that is not half as much as papa paid for his seat in the House of Commons."

KIND OLD LADY: "And so you are blind, my poor man?" Poor Man: "Yesum. I was born blind." Kind Old Lady (shocked): "Born blind! Is it possible? How you must feel the loss of your eyesight."

"ANYTHING fresh or new this morning?" said a reporter to the young lady typewriter as he loomed against the wall of a railway office. "Yes," she replied. "What is it?" asked the reporter, grabbing an envelope. "That paint you were leaning against so gracefully."

MR. MERKE: "The paper says the judge reserved his decision. I don't see why it is judges invariably put off deciding a point until the next day." Mrs. M.: "Huh! Judges have sense enough to want to consult their wives."

MISS BOSTON: "Is it not remarkable! The writings of a man who lived before the pyramids were built, have just been discovered, and published to the world." Struggling Author: "Which magazine did he send them to?"

Mrs. LOOKENBACK: "Didn't you frequently vow, sir, when you were courting me, that you loved me to distraction?" Mr. Lookenback: "Yes, and I never discovered until after our marriage how thoroughly distracted I was at the time."

ACQUITTED: "What did the club do when Chappie was caught cheating at cards?" "O, nothing. They said Chappie, as a member of the club, must be a gentleman; that a gentleman would not cheat, and that therefore Chappie was innocent."

"Why do you call these tall buildings skyscrapers?" asked Rivers; "they don't scrape anything. They stand perfectly still." "They scrape twenty-five thousand miles of sky with every revolution of the earth," replied Brooks, pitying the other's ignorance.

HUSBAND (to wife as they start out): "But aren't you going to wear anything on your head?" Wife (provoked): "Why, you horrid thing, I've got on my summer bonnet." Husband: "You'd better wrap the bill around it so as not to catch cold."

STOUT LADY PASSENGER in a car, wincing (he had trodden on her best corn): "Paw! clumsy." Polite Old Gent: "Very sorry, my dear madam; but if you had a foot large enough to be seen such an accident couldn't occur." And then the stout lady smiled.

A SCOTTISH blacksmith being asked what was the meaning of metaphysics, replied: "When the party who listens diana ken what the party who speaks means, and when the party who speaks diana ken what he means himself—that metaphysics."

"Well, Pat, what are you doing now?" "Shure, an' I play in the band anyhow." "What instrument do you handle?" "Faith, an' I play the big drum." "Isn't it pretty hard work?" "Ah, no. I just hold the drum up, an' another feller dux all the poundering."

PORTLY: "I met the census man just now. He was asking how long you had been like it." Smiler: "Like what?" Portly: "Why, your paper describes you as an unemployed female imbecile." Smiler: "You don't say so! I've mixed the thing up, I meant that for the servant."

Mrs. HARRIS (looking up from a letter): "I'm so glad that we sent Harry to Oxford. I knew he would make his mark. He says that he is already considered one of the best scholars of his college." Mr. Harris: "Let me see that letter. That word isn't 'scholars,' it is 'sculliers.'"

MR. PILLS (doom tenens for the parish doctor): "Tut, tut! Dear me, you want a complete change—perfect quiet and seclusion, regular hours, muscular exercise, and a strict dietary scale." Bill Sikke: "What! Why, guv'nor, I don't want to be run in ag'in—I on'y come out n' Tuesday."

A LITTLE New York boy, whose father is a prominent club man, was studying his lesson not long since. The little boy was very much puzzled over his lessons, and finally he asked his pa, "Pa, what does the word 'pretext' mean?" "Don't bother me," said his father, who was reading a newspaper; but his mother spoke up and said sweetly: "When your father says he has to go to the club on important business, that is a pretext to get away from his family." Tommy jotted down the definition and read it out in the school, thereby causing a sensation.

A VERY THOUGHTFUL MAN.—"What did the doctor order for your husband?" "Quinine and whisky." "Isn't quinine pretty dear?" "Yes, but we didn't get any. Poor John is very considerate. He told me not to mind the quinine, he would try and get along with the whisky."

An Englishman who had been invited to dine at a certain German Court had the misfortune to upset a glass of wine on the table. "Is that the custom in England?" inquired a princeling. Not in the least abashed, the Englishman answered: "Not exactly; but when it does happen nobody makes a fuss about it."

PARSON (sternly): "See here, my young friend, you have been defeking again." Young Friend (stoutly): "Ah! no. How do you know?" Parson: "I can smell it on your breath." Young Friend: "You've been stealing horses." Parson (shocked): "Sir! Young Friend: "Have, sure as guns. I can see horse hair on your coat."

ANGRY MOTHER IN LAW: "You never inquired once how I was coming on during my long sickness. You knew I was dangerously ill, but you did not manifest the slightest interest." Son-in-law: "But I felt it all the same. I didn't make any parade of my feelings, but I looked over the mortuary report in the paper, in the hope of seeing your name."

It happened at a complimentary banquet given to a military man, and the chairman in the course of his remarks laid his hand affectionately on the major's shoulder and said, "How many battles has not our gallant guest taken part in?" and how pleased that major was as he read in the next day's *Squire* "How many bottles," &c.

One day some school children were having an object lesson on birds. The teacher called attention to the small tail of the blue heron, saying, "The bird has no tail to speak of." The next day she asked the class to write a description of the bird, and one little girl thus concluded her essay: "The blue heron has a tail, but it must not be talked about."

The other day, after a wheezy old hand-organ had been played for ten minutes in front of a suburban residence, the owner descended the steps and asked, "Do you expect to be paid for standing here and grinding out such a noise?" "Well, sir, some pay me for grinding out the noise, and some pay me for stopping it and moving on. You can take your choice."

He was praising her beautiful hair, and begging for one tiny curl, when her little brother said: "Oh, my, tain't nothing now! You just ought to have seen how long it hangs down when she hangs it on the side of the table to comb it." Then they laughed, and she called her brother a funny little duck, and when the young man was going away and heard that boy yelling, he thought the lad was taken suddenly and dangerously ill.

"I HAVE withdrawn from such amiable acting club," said Willie Washington. "Why?" "I couldn't stand it any longer, yer know. I was cawed for the villain and Miss Pepperton was the heroine, and she was to say, 'Villain! do yoush worst.' " "That was easy." "Y-a-a-s; but Miss Pepperton wouldn't repeat the words. Instead, she said I had already done as badly as any one could reasonably expect."

MARK TWAIN told of a minister who took advantage of a christening to display his oratorical powers. Taking the infant in his arms, the preacher said to the audience: "He is a little fellow,—yes, a little fellow; and, as I look in your faces, I see an expression of scorn which suggests that you despise him. But, if you had the soul of a poet or the gift of prophecy, you would not despise him. You would look far into the future and see what might be. So this little child may be a great poet and write tragedies, or perhaps a great warrior wading in blood to his neck; he may be—er—what is his name?—his name, oh, is 'Mary Ann!'"

SOCIETY.

INVISIBLE fastenings are more than ever the style for securing the waists of gowns.

A NOVELTY for gentlemen's cravats is a little frog in enamel, with yellow breast and pink feet.

SLEEVES have a tendency to diminish in size for day wear, but remain as high and full as ever for evening.

THERE are eight ladies among the 347 students who are attending the evening term of the Caroline Institute in Stockholm.

THE influenza showed a decided preference for the south side of Cadogan-square, nearly every house being affected.

THERE is a prison and reformatory for women in Indiana which is managed entirely by women, without any assistance from the other sex.

THE Empress Frederick will probably continue to make Homburg her head quarters until the end of August, when she is coming to England on a month's visit to the Queen at Balmoral.

A SWISS woman has just invented a watch for the blind, on the dial of which the hours are indicated by twelve projecting pegs, one of which sinks every hour.

THE European Ministers have had their audience with the Emperor of China. The latter is described as somewhat frightened and melancholy looking.

THE use of art for purposes of advertisement is no new thing, but perhaps few people have noticed that on the line at the Academy there is a very faithful representation of a ladies' newspaper.

SERPENTS, lizards, and spiders have enjoyed quite a run of popularity, and now the toad has arrived to share it with them. As a brooch, the toad mostly appears in gold, with jewelled eyes.

"THE bridal of May," says the old proverb, "is the bridal of death." Antiquaries trace this superstition back to ancient Rome, where during this month the Lupercalia, or festivals in honour of the dead, were held.

THE Queen of Roumania has just sent a graceful offering to Queen Victoria. It consists of some of "Carmen Sylva's" poems, written by her own hand, and beautifully illuminated. The volume is bound in vellum, which is exquisitely painted by the Royal authoress.

URON large hats great clumps of rhododendron bloom, are now decoratively set, while the last freaks of fashion upon rough-looking straw shapes are the spiky and prickly, though admirably imitated, Scotch thistles, surrounded by their curiously grey-green and hairy foliage.

IT is said that the baptism of the little Lady something Duff, the Queen's latest grandchild, will not take place until July, when the German Emperor will be god-father, and the Princess of Wales one god-mother, the other being either the Queen, the Kaiserin, or the Duchess of Fife herself.

THE arrangements for the visit of the German Emperor are giving infinite trouble, owing to his Majesty's inveterate habit of constantly changing his plans. He has been asked to arrive on Monday, July 6th, but now appears disposed to come two or three days earlier, which would be excessively inconvenient both to the Queen and to the Prince of Wales.

THERE is, some question as to whether the latest born scion of Royalty can, or cannot, be ranked as a Princess. The Queen is said to be against the recognition, while the authorities of the Home Office are in its favour. Anyhow, in the announcement of the birth to foreign Courts, the newly-born was mentioned as daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Fife!

STATISTICS.

£170 is spent yearly in the Queen's Household on soap.

AT present one-twentieth of the scholars in Board Schools pay no fees.

TWELVE per cent. of the London water supply is drawn from artesian wells.

£1 300,000 worth of pickles and sauces are exported to other countries yearly.

THERE are said to be 698 newspapers and journals issued within a radius of six miles from Charing Cross.

GEMS.

IF you would not have affliction visit you twice, listen at once to what it teaches.

SORROW is knowledge; they that know the most mourn the deepest of the fatal truth; the tree of knowledge is not the tree of life.

CONTENTMENT, even in its incipient state, banishes all real benevolence or helpfulness. It kills the sentiment, destroys the desire, and banishes the power of doing good. Attempts to assist another made in this spirit are like alms thrown scornfully to a beggar; they can only insult and wound without benefiting either the giver or the receiver.

LET us do right, and then, whether happiness comes or unhappiness, it is no very weighty matter. If happiness come, life will be sweet, and if it does not come life will be bitter; bitter, not sweet, and yet to be borne. The well-being of our souls depends only on what we are; and nobleness of character is nothing else but steady love of good and steady scorn of evil.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CARROT FRITTERS.—Slice some cold cooked carrots that have been boiled, braised, or stewed; dip each slice into beaten egg, then into fine baked bread crumbs, and fry in plenty of boiling fat till crisp and nicely coloured. Drain, and serve piled on a napkin, garnished with fried parsley.

WAFFLES.—One pint of flour, one teaspoonful of baking powder, one half a teaspoonful of salt, four well-beaten eggs, one and one-half cups of milk, one tablespoonful of melted butter and the beaten yolks of the eggs with the milk, and the melted butter and the whites of the eggs last; cook on a hot, well-greased griddle.

WHITE ICING.—One pound of icing sugar, two or three whites of eggs; a drop or two of blue, and a few drops of lemon juice may be added, as both help to preserve the colour. The eggs are simply stirred and beaten in among the icy sugar till it is smooth and glossy and the proper thickness, and then spread on. If the cakes are hot or warm the icing discolours; they should be quite cold, and if very greasy a little flour may be rubbed over first.

To make orange pudding, take half a pound of butter, half a pound of sugar, two ounces of stale sponge cake (rubbed fine), five eggs, two tablespoonfuls of brandy and rose-water, mixed, and the gratings and juice of one large orange or two small ones. Beat the butter and sugar very light; then add the grated sponge cake; whisk the eggs until very thick, which stir in by degrees, adding alternately the orange, brandy, and rose-water. Mix well, without beating too much. This recipe will make two puddings, soup-plate size. Line the plates with a rich paste, and bake in a quick oven. When done, sift white sugar over it, after giving it time to cool a little.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE duty on a pack of playing cards is 3d.

A doctor says that stammering is almost unknown among savages.

THE brain of a man is fully 10 per cent. heavier than that of the average woman.

A good hypnotic, and one that need not be feared, is a tumbler of milk taken just a minute before getting into bed, no matter how late the hour may be.

THE Hawaiian race has been steadily dwindling in numbers during the present century, and the latest census gives it a population of but 40,000, or a decrease of one-half within a half century.

DISPENSIA is said to be one of the causes of premature baldness, and massage as a preventive is highly recommended. The scalp must be gently moved backward and forward to excite circulation, while the hands remain in one position.

THE "Breeches" Bible is so called from the following passage. "Then the eles of them were both opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed figs leaves together and made themselves breeches" (Gen. iii. 7). Printed in 1560.

AN accurate instrument lately recorded the velocity of the wind, during a gale, at the summit of the Eiffel Tower, to be 630 miles an hour. M. Mascart, who conducted the test, remarked that if such a velocity had existed at a lower altitude every chimney in Paris would have been blown down.

A PECULIARITY of the Indian sparrow is its intense pugnacity. If a mirror is exposed in any place which the bird frequents it will instantly "go for" the reflected image of itself, under the belief that it is attacking a rival, and will continue this futile battle for many hours, without even desisting for food, drink, or rest.

THERE is on exhibition in New York an enormous sponge, which is said to be the largest one ever obtained. It measures ten feet in circumference, and is two feet thick, being quite solid throughout. "It was fished up near the Bahama Islands by the crew of a vessel engaged in that trade. When thoroughly soaked, this monster sponge is said to hold ten paddles of water."

THE word "blatherskite" in its origin is Scotch, being composed of the Scotch blather, equivalent to the German *balder*, to talk nonsense, and skate, corrupted *skite*, a term of contempt. The original meaning was "one who talks nonsense in a blustering manner." From this comes the meaning, a good-for-nothing, a man who talks too much. The word is good English.

IN Holland, Sweden, Norway, Poland, and parts of Russia, the mother of a new-born babe, if not too poor, provides a small cheese, which is cut in small slices and distributed among the unmarried ladies of the neighbourhood. Any young lady who receives her share of the cheese and eats it without asking where it came from or who sent it, will meet her future husband at a cross-path or cross-roads within a month.

THE highest medical authority asserts that cooked apples, either boiled or baked, are the best food for patients in the fevered condition of small-pox, typhoid fever, and erysipelas. Apples are now considered to contain far more brain food than any other fruit or vegetable, and to be much more nutritious than potatoes, which enter so largely into the component parts of every meal. At present apples are principally used in the form of puddings, pies, tarts, and sauces, and are also eaten raw, in which state they are more wholesome than when mingled with butter, eggs, and flour. But they are very delicious when simply baked and served at every meal, and, substituted for pickles and such condiments, they would surely be found beneficial.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ADELAIDE.—If you made no agreement you cannot claim anything now.

QUESTIONS.—We can only recommend cutting the ends frequently.

X. Y. Z.—You had better take a lawyer's advice on the subject.

A. C. A.—Your question is quite out of our way. You had better apply to a sporting paper.

ROBIN GRAY.—Mr. Disraeli never sat in Parliament as a Liberal.

WRATHFUL.—Sending libellous statements on postcards is actionable.

NOLCHINA.—The 6th Dragoon Guards wear a blue tunic.

JOHNIE STOUT.—An apprentice is not transferred with the business.

T. B. C.—The law does not recognise such a relationship at all.

MIC.—Certainly not. You must take the usual proceedings.

OLD MAID.—A man may not legally marry his aunt, nor his wife's aunt.

IN A FIX.—No, you cannot under the circumstances purchase your discharge.

REX.—There are no locks in the Suez Canal. It is 85 miles long.

DISGUSTED.—You cannot get a transfer from army to navy, or vice versa.

ZADU.—A married woman may leave her own separate property as she pleases.

FRIGER.—There is no Sunday delivery of letters within the metropolitan area.

A LONELY LASS.—The 1st Battalion of the Black Watch is at Malta, and the second is at home.

S. T.—The owner of freehold property may will his estate to whom he pleases.

VIOLET.—The Greenacre murder was committed in 1837, and the Wainwright murder in 1875.

ONE IN DISTRESS.—Apply to the Relieving Officer of the district for all information as to parish relief.

PATRIOT.—The Duchess of Fife is the next in succession to the throne after her father and brothers.

JOB.—Any question between master and apprentice may be referred to the local justices.

INDIGNANT ONE.—Unless by agreement, a master is not bound to pay an apprentice his wages during illness.

AFRICK.—1. Inhabited-house duty is payable on houses of the annual value of £10 and upwards. 2. No.

KENNETH.—Twenty quires make a ream of paper; but a printer's ream is reckoned at 24 quires.

HECTOR.—The market value of old postage stamps varies greatly in proportion to the demand.

REGULAR READER.—Any press directory will give the information. You can get a good one for a shilling.

LADDIE.—Feed your gold fish on raw fish, and raw beef scrapings, with an occasional crumb of tea biscuit.

E. T. D.—Inquire of any patent agent, or address the Patent Office, 25, Southampton-buildings, London, W.C.

G. L.—The explanation would take up too much room in our columns, but you will find the receipt in any cookery book.

A. EARL.—We really cannot understand your letter, but as far as we can comprehend we think it is a question for a lawyer to settle.

FAIR AS A LILY.—A lady's engagement ring is usually worn on the finger which will afterwards bear the wedding ring.

MIGNON.—Income-tax is not payable unless you have a yearly income of £150 including the annual value of your house.

MATRIMONIAL.—It is necessary that the registrar should be present at a marriage in a Nonconformist place of worship.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—Marriage with a deceased wife's sister is legal in the United States, and in some of the Australian colonies.

ROUTE.—If the first husband turned up, the second marriage would become void, but you would not be punished.

COCKROO.—Authorities differ; but some of the best say the cuckoo makes its winter quarters south of the Mediterranean.

THURLE.—A debtor can only be committed to prison for contempt of Court when he wilfully refuses to obey an order made by the judge.

JOHNIE TUCKER.—Japan is governed by an Emperor, but a new constitution, including two Houses of Parliament, has recently been introduced.

JACK.—The Great Eastern steamship measured 692 ft. by 88 ft; horse power—paddles, 1,000, screw, 1,000; weight of ship, 12,000 tons; cost £732,000.

I. B.—The driver of a horse and trap is not liable for accident when they are fairly used by him; but he would be liable if negligence could be shown.

J. H.—When you want to replace broken window panes remember that a red-hot iron passed over old putty will soften it so that it can be easily removed.

RICHARD.—It is held at the common law that "If one encourage and assist another in the commission of suicide, he is guilty of murder as a principal."

FORTUNATUS.—In England years ago the body of a suicide was treated ignominiously, and buried in the open highway with a stake thrust through it.

ANXIOUS ONE.—We do not like to discourage you, but truth compels us to say that any efforts you may make to remove the scar or cover it with hair will be absolutely wasted.

PUZZLED.—The Queen's name is Alexandria Victoria; she has no other. People of her rank are not distinguished by surnames. Her father was Edward, Duke of Kent.

MARIANNE.—The personal property of a deceased wife, dying without a will, goes to the husband. Real property goes to the husband for life, and afterwards to the children.

CURIOSITY.—Mr. Gladstone, when his own Chancellor of the Exchequer, from 1880 to December, 1882, drew £5,000 as First Lord of the Treasury and £2,500 as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

MISFAH.

The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another. Gen. xxxi. 49.

Go thou thy way, and I go mine;
Apart, yet not far;
Only a thin veil hangs between
The pathways where we are.
And "God keep watch 'tween thee and me!"
—This is my prayer.
He looks thy way, he looketh mine,
And keeps us near.

I know not where thy road may lie,
Or which way mine will be;
If mine will be through parching sands,
And thine beside the sea;
Yet God keep watch 'tween thee and me,
So never fear.
He holds thy hand, he claspeth mine,
And keeps us near.

Should wealth and fame, perchance, be thine,
And my lot lowly be;
Or you be sad and sorrowful,
And glory be for me,
Yet God keep watch 'tween thee and me;
Both be his care.
One arm round thee and one round me
Will keep us near.

I sigh, sometimes, to see thy face,
But since this may not be,
I'll leave thee to the care of Him
Who cares for thee and me.
"I'll keep you both beneath my wings!"
—This comforts, dear.
One wing o'er thee and one o'er me;
So are we near.

And though our paths be separate,
And thy way is not mine,
Yet, coming to the mercy seat,
My soul will meet with thine.
And "God keep watch 'tween thee and me,"
I'll whisper there.
He blessed thee, and he blesteth me,
And we are near.

DISTRACTED ONE.—A man is not responsible for the debts which his wife contracted before her marriage, except to the extent of all the property to which he shall have become entitled through his wife.

BOB.—There is no recruiting now taking place in this country for the Cape Mounted Police, the force is exclusively recruited in the colony. There is nothing about it to make it especially attractive to young men.

DOUBT.—When any doubt exists as to the strict legality of a marriage it is not unusual to go through the ceremony of marriage a second time; and there have been cases of a third ceremony of marriage being performed, good cause being given.

PAUL.—The muscadins of Paris were the exquisites who aped the London cockneys in the First French Revolution. Their dress was top-boots with thick soles, knee-breeches, a dress-coat with long tails and high stiff collar, and a thick cudgel called a "constitution."

GLAUCUS.—The Falernian wine, one of the choicest wines of the ancient Romans, was red, very spirituous, and most powerful when from fifteen to twenty years old. It was obtained in Falernus Ager, a district in the northern part of ancient Campania.

HOTSPUR.—It was Louis XII. who is said to have had such a detestation of war that he rather chose to lose his duchy of Milan than burden his subjects with a war tax. Hence he was charged with being in favour of "peace at any price."

INQUIRER.—Nova Scotia has a fine climate and advancing manufactures. If you have friends there we think you need not hesitate to join them, but if you are going out in mere speculation there is a certain amount of risk in it, for of course the sphere is somewhat limited. Men in your trade receive from \$5 to 75, per day.

PATIENCE.—A disagreeable breath may be corrected by putting two drops of a concentrated solution of permanganate of potassa in a glass of water, and rinsing the mouth with it. If the trouble arises from a decayed tooth, put a few drops of the solution on a piece of cotton and introduce it in the cavity of the tooth.

DUCHESSES.—1. Prince Albert died in Windsor Castle, December 14, 1861. 2. The title of "His Royal Highness Prince Consort" was conferred upon him by letters patent, under the great seal, June 25, 1857, so that in case of his surviving Queen Victoria, he might act as regent during the minority of the Prince of Wales.

CONSTANT READER.—The story that there is a manufactory of artificial eggs anywhere is pure nonsense. If your friend is so very confident of the truth of what he alleges he ought to be able to tell you where the factories are, or show you some authority in print for his statement.

N. P.—Monte Carlo is situated in the principality of Monaco; a strip of beautiful country in the Mediterranean, and is bounded on all sides by the French Department of the Maritime Alps. It has an area of about eight square miles, and is under the protection of France.

M. H.—The words "In the midst of life we are in death," which are contained in the Burial Service, are derived from a Latin antiphon, said to have been composed by Notker, a monk of St. Gall, in 911, while watching some workmen building a bridge in peril of their lives.

POLITICAL.—The two longest House of Commons speeches of which we have records is one by Lord Palmerston, in defence of his foreign policy, March 1, 1848, when he spoke for five hours; and one by Mr. J. Chamberlain, in explaining his Merchant Shipping Bill on the second reading, May 19, 1884, extending over four hours.

LAURA.—A man who opens a shop is just as free to refuse to sell anything whatever to anyone requesting him to do so as any man is to refuse to go in and buy if a shopkeeper asks him to do so. He can sit among his stock, no matter what it is composed of, from day to day declining to sell anything whatever, and as long as he pays his rent no one can interfere with him.

ETIQUETTE.—It is the duty of a young man who is "recognised" by a young woman in the street to lift his hat to her at once. He must not do so, however, until she recognises him, as no man is at liberty to force his attention upon any woman. It is in the option of a young woman to recognise a male acquaintance or not as she thinks fit.

N. D.—According to the "Statesman's Year Book," the strength of European armies on a war footing are as follows:—Italy, 2,765,000; France, 2,500,000; Russia, 2,455,000; Germany, 2,294,000; and Austria, 1,681,000. These figures are, however, somewhat misleading, as each nation has different classes of reserves which may or may not be practically available.

AURORA.—Children of twenty years ago were more familiar with the entertaining stories of A. L. O. E. (a lady of England) than is the present generation. "The Giant Killer," "Phidre and His Prisoners," and numerous other moral but highly fascinating tales were always to be found in libraries for children, and were eagerly read. The author, Miss Tucker, is now a charming old lady, and resides in Northern India. She devotes the greater part of her time to mission work among the senanas.

OLD ROMAN.—One reason why the wars of the Romans were so much more sanguinary than those of modern times was, because in those days armies fought hand to hand, with weapons something like bowie knives.

There was no fighting at long range, or roundabout strategical movements, whereby a defeated army would be allowed to retreat with but few killed or wounded. When one of their armies was defeated the victors were in arms' length of them, and it, of course, fared hard with the vanquished. Besides, the warriors of those days fought to kill.

ARIEL.—Frederick William Faber wrote the poem entitled, "The Life of Trust," the concluding stanza of which reads as follows:—

"For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

The author of the poem named was originally a clergyman of the Church of England, but became a convert to the Catholic religion, and a priest in that Church. He was the author of several volumes of poems, many of them of remarkable tenderness and beauty.

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